Welcome to Anxiety Toolbox!

The goal of the Anxiety Toolbox is to provide you with some skills to recognize and manage symptoms you may be experiencing. Please take your time and work at your own pace. 

*We hope you find it helpful!*

Anxiety Toolbox Goals:

✘ We want to provide you with life-long tools you can use while facing anxiety-triggering situations.

✘ We are not trying to “get rid of” your anxiety.

✘ This is a jumping board to use skills in your daily life to reduce anxiety.
Anxiety Toolbox

Sections

#1: Anxiety 101

#2: Automatic Thoughts and Unhelpful Cognitions

#3: Alternative Responses, Grounding, and Self-Care – Putting It All Together
#1 Anxiety 101
What is anxiety??
Anxiety 101

- Common Anxiety Symptoms
- Stress vs. Clinical Anxiety
- Stress Curve
- Anxiety Avoidance Roller Coaster
- Physiological Responses – Fight, Flight, Freeze
- Fuller Picture: Cross Sectional Formulation
- Sleep Hygiene
Anxiety Symptoms

- Racing heart
- Nausea
- Brain zaps
- Falling sensation
- Headaches
- Cold chills
- Shaking
- Weakness
- Difficulty breathing
- Dizziness
- Dizzy knot in stomach
- Sweating
- Weak legs
- Yawning
- Chest pressure
- Tightness
- Numbness
- Twitching
- Muscle tension
- Eye strain
- Restless legs
- Body jolts
- Giddiness
- Hot flash
- Night sweats
- Head pressure
- Body pain
- Memory loss
- Lightheadedness
- Blurred vision
- Ringing in the ears
- Burning
- Hair on skin
- Stabbing pains
- Swaying feeling
- Head pain
- Stuck thoughts
- Chronic fatigue
- Frequent urination
- Weak limbs
- Startle easy
- Anxietycentre.com
# Stress vs. Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Clinical Anxiety</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✗ Is a response to a known environmental factor</td>
<td>✗ Can occur with chronic stress, major stressful event, or when there is no identifiable stressor</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Symptoms usually go away when stressor goes away</td>
<td>✗ Symptoms persist even after the stressor has passed</td>
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<tr>
<td>✗ Is something we all experience at some point in our lives</td>
<td>✗ Symptom intensity is exaggerated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Can be motivational</td>
<td>✗ Causes significant distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✗ Interferes with your daily life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✗ Is not motivational</td>
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</table>
The idea here is that someone who has no stress or anxiety has little motivation.

Whereas someone with too much anxiety may avoid the situation or perform poorly.

However, with a moderate level of anxiety, a person is likely to be motivated without becoming debilitated or avoidant.
(A person is confronted with an anxiety-producing situation which leads to an uncomfortable sense of worry and agitation.)

(The anxiety-producing situation is avoided, and the person receives a feeling of relief. However, next time the anxiety will be worse.)

Sound familiar?
(A person is confronted with an anxiety-producing situation which leads to an uncomfortable sense of worry and agitation.)

But the short term relief of avoidance and escape comes at a high cost.

Avoidance and escape contribute to the persistence of anxiety and reduces daily functioning.

(The anxiety-producing situation is avoided, and the person receives a feeling of relief. However, next time the anxiety will be worse.)
HOW CAN WE GET OFF THE ANXIETY-AVOIDANCE ROLLER COASTER?

✗ First, we need to understand what’s happening when you experience anxiety.

✗ Let’s start by talking about what’s going on in your body:
  ✗ A big part of anxiety has to do with our physiological responses to stressors.
  ✗ Some of you may have heard of the fight, flight or freeze response. That’s what we are talking about here.
The fight or flight response is an automatic response that gets the body ready to fight or run away. Have you experienced any of these?

- Thoughts racing
- Breathing becomes quicker and shallower
- Heart beats faster
- Adrenal glands release adrenaline
- Bladder urgency
- Palms become sweaty
- Muscles tense
- Hands get cold
- Changes to vision
- Dizzy or lightheaded
- Dry mouth
- Dry mouth
- Changes to vision
- tunnel vision, or vision becoming 'sharper'
- Muscles in the bladder relax in response to stress
- Muscles in the bladder relax in response to stress
- Adrenaline signals other organs to get ready
- Feeds more blood to the muscles and enhances ability to fight or run away
- Breathing becomes quicker and shallower to take in more oxygen and make our body more able to fight or run away
- Helps us to evaluate threat quickly and make rapid decisions, can be hard to focus on anything but the feeling of danger
- The body sweats to keep cool, this makes it a more efficient machine
- Bladder urgency
- Muscles in the bladder relax in response to stress
- Hands get cold
- Blood vessels in the skin contract to force blood towards major muscle groups
- Dry mouth
- Changes to vision
- tunnel vision, or vision becoming 'sharper'
- Muscles in the bladder relax in response to stress
- Thoughts racing helps us to evaluate threat quickly and make rapid decisions, can be hard to focus on anything but the feeling of danger
- Breathing becomes quicker and shallower to take in more oxygen and make our body more able to fight or run away
- The 'fight or flight' response gets the body ready to fight or run away. Once a threat is detected your body responds automatically. All of the changes happen for good reasons, but may be experienced as uncomfortable when they happen in 'safe' situations.
Let’s get a fuller picture...
Cross sectional formulation

Explores the interactions between:

- A situation
- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Physical sensations
- Behaviors

**Situation** (When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?)

**Physical** (When anxious, what physical sensations did you experience? What did you notice in your body?)

**Emotional** (What emotions came up for you when you felt anxious? What did that say or mean about you or the situation?)

**Cognitive** (What went through your mind when you felt anxious? What did that say or mean about you or the situation?)

**Behavioral** (What was your first instinct and/or automatic response? What did you do and/or avoid doing at the time?)
Cross sectional formulation

Explores the interactions between:

- A situation
- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Physical sensations
- Behaviors

Let's walk through a situation that has caused someone else anxiety...

**Situation** *(When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?)*

A student invited me to a party in my residence hall, but I didn’t know her very well and felt anxious about going.
The cross sectional formulation helps us to write down our reactions to the situation…

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Physical sensations
- Behaviors

Physical (When anxious, what physical sensations did you experience? What did you notice in your body?)
Heart racing, tight chest, shallow breathing, hot

Emotional (What emotions came up for you when you felt anxious?)
Scared, ashamed, Lonely, agitated, nervous

Cognitive (What went through your mind when you felt anxious? What did that say or mean about you or the situation?)
I won’t know anyone at the party and will feel awkward. No one will like me because I’m so socially awkward. I won’t have fun. But if I say no, this person won’t like me and I wouldn’t make friends.

Behavioral (What was your first instinct and/or automatic response? What did you do and/or avoid doing at the time?)
My first instinct was to say no. I avoided saying no but telling her that I would think about it. I never got back to her. I didn’t go to the party.
Cross sectional formulation

Explores the interactions between:

✘ A situation

Now, let's try walking through a situation that has recently caused you anxiety…

Situation *(When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?)*
Cross sectional formulation

Now let’s put ourselves back in that situation and write down the emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and psychical sensations that we were feeling in that situation...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Physical sensations
- Behaviors
Cross sectional formulation

✘ Were you able to identify a specific anxiety provoking situation and corresponding anxiety responses?

✘ Okay! Congrats on your first Cross Sectional Formulation!

✘ We’ll be asking you to continue to practice these so it gets easier to identify anxiety provoking situations and your responses.
Wrap-Up Anxiety 101

To wrap up, let’s talk about sleep.

Good sleep, along with physical activity and attending to your personal nutritional needs, are the foundation of basic physical and mental health.

Without this foundation, you may find you’re more vulnerable to anxiety symptoms.
Let's Talk About Sleep...

✘ Lots of important things happen while you sleep.
✘ Research shows that your brain is forming pathways necessary for learning!
✘ Lack of Sleep impacts mood, energy, memory, grades, ability to focus and ability to concentrate.
✘ It’s common for people to stay up late, pull all-nighters, ”catch up” on sleep later, take naps, etc... **Does this sound familiar to anyone?**
✘ Important: We **need 7 to 8 hours of sleep consistently EVERY night!**
# Sleep Hygiene Tips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Get Regular</th>
<th>Get up &amp; try again.</th>
<th>Bed is for sleeping.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go to bed and get up at more or less the same time every day, even on weekends and days off!</td>
<td>Go to sleep only when tired. If you haven’t been able to fall asleep after 30 minutes, get up and do something calming, then return to bed and try again.</td>
<td>Do not use your bed for anything other than sleeping and sex, so that your body comes to associate bed with sleep.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Avoid Alcohol</th>
<th>The right space.</th>
<th>Avoid caffeine &amp; nicotine</th>
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<td>Avoid alcohol for at least 4-6 hours before bed because it interrupts the quality of sleep</td>
<td>Make your bed and bedroom quiet and comfortable for sleeping. An eye mask and earplugs may help block out light and noise.</td>
<td>Avoid consuming any caffeine (coffee, tea, soda, chocolate) or nicotine (cigarettes) for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. These act as stimulants and interfere with falling asleep.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sleep Hygiene Tips

Electronics Curfew
Don’t use back-lit electronics 60 minutes prior to bed, as the artificial light prevents hormones and neurons that promote sleep.

No clock-watching.
Checking the clock during the night can wake you up and reinforces negative thoughts such as “Oh no, look how late it is, I’ll never get to sleep.”

Keep same daytime routine
Even if you have a bad night sleep it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned. That is, don’t avoid activities because you feel tired. This can reinforce the insomnia.

No naps
Avoid taking naps during the day. If you can’t make it through the day without a nap, make sure it is for less than an hour and before 3pm.

Sleep rituals
Develop rituals to remind your body that it is time to sleep, like relaxing stretches or breathing exercises for 15 minutes before bed.
**Practice**

**Homework 1:** Complete at least 1 Simple Cross Sectional Formulation worksheet

**Homework 2:** Implement 1 Sleep Hygiene Tip
Cross sectional formulation

Explores the interactions between:

- A situation

Now, let’s try walking through a situation that has recently caused you anxiety...

**Situation** *(When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?)*
Cross sectional formulation

Now let’s put ourselves back in that situation and write down the emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and psychical sensations that we were feeling in that situation…

- Thoughts
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Physical (When anxious, what physical sensations did you experience? What did you notice in your body?)

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Cognitive (What went through your mind when you felt anxious? What did that say or mean about you or the situation?)

Behavioral (What was your first instinct and/or automatic response? What did you do and/or avoid doing at the time?)
#2 Automatic Thoughts and Unhelpful Cognitions
Quotations are commonly printed as a means of inspiration and to invoke philosophical thoughts from the reader.

Automatic Thoughts YouTube Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2zRA5zCA6M
Anxiety Triggers

✘ Triggers can be external events (e.g., a test) or internal stimuli (e.g., a physical sensation or emotion) that led to anxiety.

✘ It may be difficult to identify a trigger, understanding your triggers for anxiety is an important step in helping you know when to practice the coping strategies you will learn in Anxiety Toolbox.
Anxiety triggers

External Events (e.g., a test)

Responses to External Stimuli:

✘ Presence of Others: attending a social event or meeting with a professor

✘ Physical Setting: a classroom or an area on campus

✘ Social Pressure: feeling pressured to make friends or perform well in school (in comparison to your peers)

✘ Activities: e.g., a sports event or a party

Internal Stimuli (e.g., a physical sensation or emotion)

Responses to Internal Stimuli:

✘ Emotions: feeling down, fear or worry

✘ Mental Images: replaying interpersonal interactions or performance experiences

✘ Physical State: racing heartbeat, lightheadedness, tightness in chest

✘ Thoughts: “I might fail this test” or “That person must not like me”
Practice

- **Homework 1**: Write down your Anxiety Triggers
- **Homework 2**: Let’s do another Cross Sectional Formulation worksheet!
List Your Anxiety Triggers:

1.____________________________________________________________________________________
2.____________________________________________________________________________________
3.____________________________________________________________________________________
4.____________________________________________________________________________________
5.____________________________________________________________________________________
Cross sectional formulation

Explores the interactions between:

• A situation

Now, let's try walking through a situation that has recently caused you anxiety...

Situation *(When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?)*
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Behavioral (What was your first instinct and/or automatic response? What did you do and/or avoid doing at the time?)
#3 ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES, GROUNDING, AND SELF-CARE – PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
Welcome to the 3rd and Final Section!

First, let’s take a thermometer reading of our current anxiety level after completing Anxiety 101 and Automatic Thoughts and Unhelpful Cognitions.

On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being very low to non-existent and 10 being the most severe anxiety you’ve experienced—Where are you right now?
Now, let’s take a minute to practice some deep breathing by clicking on the video to the right.

One Minute Breathing YouTube Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0FZIT3Uk30
Okay. Now, let’s take a new thermometer reading.

Please rate your current level of anxiety on the scale from 1 (very low to none) to 10 (most severe). Did you notice a shift in your number?
Now, Let’s say one thing you are grateful for today.

Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of gratitude.

A.A. Milne
Looking back on the last anxiety provoking situation and corresponding anxiety responses, we can now talk about alternative responses.

Now stop, pay attention to **what is going on in your mind and body** and then **be intentional** about what happens next.

What we want to do here is **slow down** so that you don’t get caught up in the anxiety and you feel more in control. The **ultimate goal** is for the “stop and pay attention” mantra to become second nature so that you use it before experiencing anxiety. That is going to take time and lots of practice.
Cross sectional formulation and alternative responses

✘ To better understand this “stop and pay attention” mantra, let’s work through an example of alternative responses to anxiety.

✘ I want to highlight that when we are doing alternative responses we are not saying “just think positive”, it’s not that simple!

✘ What we are saying is, let’s look at the situation from a broader perspective.
**Situation:** (When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?)

A student invited me to a party in my residence hall, but I didn’t know her very well and felt anxious about going.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Alternative Thoughts and Images: (Are these thoughts helpful? Are the anxious thoughts 100% true/accurate, 100% of the time? What are other ways of looking at this? What is the bigger picture?)</th>
<th>Alternative Behaviors: (What could you do that would be more helpful for you, others, &amp;/or the situation? What are coping strategies that might be helpful?)</th>
<th>Alternative Feelings: (What are feelings that are more helpful? What if you acted and thought differently about the situation? How might these changes help you feel differently?)</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| I may not be as socially awkward as I think. | **Coping Strategies I Can Use:**
- Deep breathing
- Distract myself
- Seek support from a friend/family member
- Do a pleasurable activity
- Use alternative response worksheet | Excited
Wanted
Liked
Hopeful |
| If she invited me, she probably wants me there. |
| I might still have an okay time even if I am anxious |
ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES: HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND DIFFERENTLY TO AN ANXIOUS SITUATION?

**Situation** (When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?)

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| **Coping Strategies I Can Use:**  
- Deep breathing  
- Distract myself  
- Seek support from a friend/family member  
- Do a pleasurable activity  
- Use alternative response worksheet |  |  |
So we’ve spent time looking at alternative responses. Now let’s shift into other strategies you can add to your toolbox: **Grounding and Self-Care**
Let’s start with a technique called “grounding”, which is used to pause, re-focus, get unstuck, and come back to the moment. It’s a sensory experience that you can use anywhere, anytime. Let’s practice one together.

**Grounding Exercise**

For use during a panic attack, when you need to stay calm, or anytime you feel "disconnected" from your body.

Look around you. Identify + name:

5 things you **see**
4 things you **feel**
3 things you **hear**
2 things you **smell**
1 thing you **taste**
# Grounding Exercises

*You may need to try multiple exercises to find one or two that work best for you.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take 10 breaths.</th>
<th>Water.</th>
<th>Remind you who you are now.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus your attention on each breath on the way out. Say the number of the breath.</td>
<td>Splash water on your face or place a cool wet cloth on your face.</td>
<td>State your name, age and where you are right now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*You may need to try multiple exercises to find one or two that work best for you.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listen to music.</th>
<th>Sitting.</th>
<th>Grounding Object.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Pay close attention and listen for something new or different.</td>
<td>While sitting, feel the chair under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down on it.</td>
<td>Find an object to hold, look at, listen, or smell. Such as a stuffed animal, stone from the beach, or any other object that represents safety or comfort.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
**Self-Care**

- **Practice self-compassion.**
  Be kind to yourself. Try to limit and course correct your self-judgments.

- **Make time for yourself.**
  Allow time for rest. Pay attention to when your self-care battery is running low—and take the time to recharge.

- **Set manageable goals for yourself.**
  Write goals down—they will lead to bigger accomplishments in the end.

- **Notice the moments of joy in your day—no matter how big or small.**
  When you take time to notice positive moments in your day, your experience of that day becomes better.

- **Gather strength from others & build a support system.**
  Countless other people have faced similar stresses or challenges. Reach out to friends, family, or a therapist.
Putting it all Together:
My Plan for Managing Anxiety

✘ Use Cross sectional formulation to note my symptoms

✘ Positive Changes I can make to my sleep: ____________________________

✘ Common Anxiety Triggers: ____________________________

✘ Common Alternative Responses for me: ______________________

✘ Grounding and Self-Care: ____________________________

✘ When I feel overwhelmed, it is helpful for me to: ___________________
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Online Resources

Mayo Clinic Stress Reduction Website
http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mindfulness-exercises/MY02124

Meditation Oasis www.meditationoasis.com

Mindful www.mindful.org


UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center- Guided Meditations
http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22
APPS FOR YOUR SMARTPHONE, TABLET, OR COMPUTER

ACT Coach
Breathe2relax
Breathing techniques by Hemalayaa
CBTi-Coach
Mindfulness Coach
Mindshift
T2 Mood Tracker
Take a break!
THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

Any questions?
You can call Counseling Services at 757-683-4401