

## **In the Name of Science : A History of Secret Programs, Medical Research, and Human Experimentation**

Some of these strategies may feel difficult the first few times you try them, but with some practice, they can offer a quick path to mental peace and relief from your feelings of anxiety.

If you need to calm down immediately, you can do so by following a few simple exercises.

There are many ways to manage anxiety symptoms in the moment, whether you're feeling anxious about doing something or you live with an anxiety disorder.

Something sets you off, and before long, you feel stuck in an endless loop of intrusive thoughts, pondering every possible thing that could go wrong. Your body tenses, your breathing quickens, and you can hear your heartbeat pounding in your ears.

When you feel anxiety kick in like this, it's time to calm yourself down. The first step is awareness. It's a good idea to learn to recognize the first signs of anxiety and get to work right away before experiencing an episode.

### Breathe

One of the best things you can do when you start to feel that familiar panicky feeling is to breathe. It may sound basic, but basic is great when managing anxiety symptoms.

Breathing deeply and slowly is key to experiencing the full benefits of it. It's also a good idea to focus your thoughts on breathing and nothing else.

“When we draw our attention to our breathing and really focus on it, the thoughts that trigger the anxiety start to become more distant, our heart rate slows, and we start to calm,” explains Dawn Straiton, doctor of nursing practice and faculty member of Walden University.

Some people find 4-7-8 breathing particularly effective.

Breathe in for 4 seconds.

Hold your breath for 7 seconds.

Exhale slowly for 8 seconds.

Repeat until you feel calmer.

### Name what you're feeling

When you're experiencing an anxious episode, you may not realize what's going on until you're really in the thick of it.

Recognizing anxiety for what it is may help you calm down quicker.

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“Name that this is anxiety” not reality” and that it will pass,” says Kim Hertz, a psychotherapist at New York Therapy Practice. “When you are in a heightened state of anxiety, you want to disrupt that cycle, and for some people, thought-stopping techniques are effective and as simple as saying “stop” to the internalized messaging that heightens anxiety.”

In other words, consider recognizing that what you’re feeling is anxiety and talking yourself through it.

“Embrace absolute truths,” says Steven Sultanoff, clinical psychologist and professor at Pepperdine University. “[Tell yourself] I will get through this” one way or another.”

Naming your sensations and feelings may help you step away from them. This is anxiety, it is not you and it won’t last forever.

Try the 5-4-3-2-1 coping technique

When you’re overwhelmed with anxiety, the 5-4-3-2-1 coping technique could help calm your thoughts down.

Here’s how it works:

Five. Look around the room, then name five things you see around you. These can be objects, spots on the wall, or a bird flying outside. The key is to count down those five things.

Look around the room, then name five things you see around you. These can be objects, spots on the wall, or a bird flying outside. The key is to count down those five things. Four. Next, name four things you can touch. This can be the ground beneath your feet, the chair you’re sitting in, or your hair that you run your fingers through.

Next, name four things you can touch. This can be the ground beneath your feet, the chair you’re sitting in, or your hair that you run your fingers through. Three. Listen quietly, then acknowledge three things you can hear. These can be external sounds, like a fan in the room, or internal sounds, like the sound of your breathing.

Listen quietly, then acknowledge three things you can hear. These can be external sounds, like a fan in the room, or

internal sounds, like the sound of your breathing. Two. Note two things you can smell. Maybe thatâ€™s the perfume youâ€™re wearing or the pencil youâ€™re holding.

Note two things you can smell. Maybe thatâ€™s the perfume youâ€™re wearing or the pencil youâ€™re holding. One. Notice something you can taste inside your mouth. Maybe thatâ€™s the lipgloss youâ€™re wearing.

This technique works best if you pair it with deep, slow breathing.

Try the "File It" mind exercise

The "File It" technique works particularly well if youâ€™re lying awake at night thinking of all the things you have to do or havenâ€™t done, or if youâ€™re rehashing something that happened during the day.

These are the steps for performing this exercise:

Close your eyes and imagine a table with file folders and a file cabinet on it. Imagine yourself picking up each file and writing down the name of a thought thatâ€™s racing through your mind " for example, the fight you had with your spouse, the presentation you have to give tomorrow at work, or the fear you have of getting sick with COVID-19. Once the name is on the file, take a moment to acknowledge the thought and how important it is to you. Then, file it away. Repeat this process with every thought that pops into your head until you start to feel calmer (or sleepy.)

The idea with this exercise is that youâ€™re taking a moment to name your triggers, examine them, and then consciously put them aside with a deadline to tackle them later. In other words, youâ€™re validating your own feelings and making a plan to deal with them, one by one, when itâ€™s a better time.

Run

"A quick burst of exercise that increases your heart rate is helpful at reducing anxiety," explains Patricia Celan, a postgraduate psychiatry resident at Dalhousie University in Canada.

A 5-minute, high-speed run around the block would be enough to help you reduce anxiety quickly, says Celan. Of course,

you could run for a longer time if that's something you enjoy.

If running is not your thing, you could try walking fast for 1 minute and then jogging for 1 minute until you reach 5 minutes total. The key is to increase your heart rate with exercise.

It's also important not to forget your breathing. While you run, consider focusing on how you're breathing.

If you live with an anxiety disorder, your amygdala is working overtime. Every time you perceive a threatening trigger, this information is sent to your amygdala. If you have anxiety, you may deal with a lot of triggers. Every time the amygdala senses a threat, it tells the body to fight, flee, or freeze.

This is a natural physiological reaction that allows you to respond to the perceived threat.

If your reaction to this message is to run, you might trick your mind into thinking it's doing something practical to keep you safe. Then, it may lower the state of alert and reduce your anxiety in the moment.

Think about something funny

“Visualize your favorite humorous moments,” says Sultanoff. “One where you laughed so hard you fell down and [nearly] peed your pants. These can be real situations, or they can be situations you saw on sitcoms, in stories, jokes, or cartoons.”

If it's difficult for you to come up with something in the moment, try picking a couple of memories ahead of time, so you can go to them as soon as you start experiencing anxiety.

Like most mindfulness training, humor visualization takes you out of worrying about things that might happen in the future and focuses you back in your present circumstances, in the “now.”

It does a few other things too. “You experience “mirth,” which is the uplifting reaction to humor,” explains Sultanoff. You feel emotions such as joy, pleasure, or delight “all powerful emotions that can help you reduce anxiety quickly.”

And if you're able to make yourself laugh by remembering that funny moment, he says, humor visualization is even more effective.

"When you laugh, you contract and expand muscles, which reduces physical anxiety, stress, and tension," he says.

Laughter also combats the production of cortisol levels in the body, he adds.

Distract yourself

If nothing seems to be working to pull your focus from your anxious thoughts, maybe it's time to find a temporary distraction.

For example, if you're lying in bed, wide awake, obsessing about what tomorrow will bring and deep breathing and other techniques aren't working, get up and leave your bedroom and find a distraction in another room.

Focusing on something you really enjoy can break the cycle of anxious thoughts and give you some relief " at least until you're in a better frame of mind to tackle those thoughts.

What that distraction is, however, varies from person to person. The idea is to find something relaxing, pleasurable, or mindless to pull your focus from your thoughts.

For example, some people find doing the dishes or cleaning their house to be a good distraction. It makes them feel active and requires some focus, but it pulls them away from just sitting there worrying.

Other people prefer listening to calming music, watching a favorite TV show or movie (just avoid one that is scary or stressful), reading, painting, or writing.

Sometimes, simply petting your cat or drinking a cup of tea helps. Just make sure you pick a low-stress activity to pull your thoughts away from the source of your anxiety.

Take a cold shower (or an ice plunge)

If you're experiencing particularly intense anxiety, says Celan, some psychiatrists have a relatively extreme (and unpleasant) way to snap you back to reality: you can fill a large bowl with cold water, throw some ice cubes in, and dunk your face in the water for 30 seconds.

Is it extreme? Yes. But it also works.

"This technique triggers your mammalian dive reflex," explains Celan. "It tricks your body into thinking you're swimming, so your heart rate slows, and your body becomes calmer."

If you don't feel like doing something this extreme, you can achieve a similar calming effect by jumping in a cold shower or going swimming.

Another option that works, and that some dialectical behavior therapists use, is to place your hand or foot in cold water for a minute or so. You could also hold an ice cube until it melts in your hand.

## Reference

[The Doctors Book of Home Remedies for Dogs and Cats: Over 1,000 Solutions to Your Pet's Problems - From Top Vets, Trainers, Breeders, and Other Animal Experts](#)

[Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Research Imagination \(Sage Study Skills Series\)](#)