

Feeling off balance?!? ...Don't sweat it...

Here are some Take-Home Strategies
and Activities for Achieving
Inner Balance and
Academic Success!

Coping Skills



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Tools to Help You Cope With Stress and Anxiety

One of the most important things to remember about dealing with stress is that you actually have all of the tools to help yourself. There are many strategies to help you deal with stress, but what will eventually help you is your own mental strength.

Everyone has these tools, but it often requires taking care of your body and re-training your mind for how you should react to stress and bring back that balance!!!

The main goal of this take-home workbook is to help you relieve anxiety felt within your daily life. The following “tool-kit” will help you to maintain the strategies and practices learned throughout this workshop, as well as introduce you to some new strategies that can help you bring balance and help your mental and physical well being.

Tips for Balance:

- **Positive thinking/Maintain a positive attitude**
- **Learn what triggers your anxiety**
- **Relaxation exercises/Visualization exercises**
- **Exercising**
- **Talking about your feelings with a friend or counsellor**
- **Learn how to deal with conflict or criticism: don't take it personally!!!**
- **Know yourself, your interests and your goals.**
- **Plan: make organized plans and follow them**
To do this: schedule your study or homework time each day, make a schedule for the next week so you know that you have enough time to get everything done.
- **Be your own best friend**
Be nice to yourself, think about yourself, listen to your own needs
- **Have a sense of humour...LAUGH!**



- **Journaling**

Writing thoughts down in a journal gives you a chance to simply let out your thoughts - something that far too many people hold inside them.

- **Yoga**

Yoga is a type of exercise that teaches breathing techniques that can be very valuable for fighting anxiety.

- **Deep Breathing**

Calm breathing is a technique that helps you slow down your breathing when feeling stressed or anxious by taking smooth, slow, and regular breaths.

Instructions:

Sitting upright is usually better than lying down or slouching, because it can increase the capacity of your lungs to fill with air. It is best to 'take the weight' off your shoulders by supporting your arms on the arms of a chair or on your lap.



- Take a slow breath in through the nose, breathing into your lower belly (for about 4 seconds)
- Hold your breath for 1 or 2 seconds
- Exhale slowly through the mouth (for about 4 seconds)
- Wait a few seconds before taking another breath

About 6-8 breathing cycles per minute is often helpful to decrease anxiety, but find your own comfortable breathing rhythm. These cycles regulate the amount of oxygen you take in so that you do not experience the fainting, tingling, and giddy sensations that are sometimes associated with over breathing.

- **Mindfulness and Meditation**

Both mindfulness and meditation have the potential to improve your ability to cope with stress/anxiety and bring balance to your life by strengthening and focussing the mind.

****REMEMBER TO KEEP IN MIND:** These are only some examples of stress management and anxiety management strategies. You may also find your own strategies that work for you. For example, perhaps you find skipping stones at a park to be a helpful tool, or maybe reading happy poetry gives you warmer feelings!

Anxiety and stress management is simply about helping your mind learn to balance!

Get Enough Sleep

A lack of sleep can cause anxiety even in those that do not experience anxiety regularly. When you don't get enough sleep, several issues affect your body that can ultimately lead to trouble with anxiety and stress.

Sleep Hygiene Tips:

- Try doing something to relax your body and mind before going to bed...NO CELL PHONE!!
- A light snack in the evening can improve sleep (although avoid heavy, spicy, or sugary foods)
- Exercising for at least 30 minutes three times a week can improve your sleep
- Having a set bedtime routine cues your body that it's time to sleep
- Try waking up at the same time every day no matter how well or how poorly you have slept. This way your body will begin to get used to a regular sleep rhythm
- Your bed should be used only for sleeping
- If you can't fall asleep after 30 minutes, get out of bed and do something "boring" until you start to feel sleepy
- Avoid consuming caffeine at least four hours before bedtime
- Naps can interfere with normal sleep cycles so skip the nap
- Getting some sunlight early in the day can be helpful in setting your body's natural wake and sleep cycle
- Remember: These strategies can take time to improve sleep; like with all the rest of the tools...PRACTICE HELPS!!!



You can bring mindful awareness to anything you do, including your schoolwork. Follow these steps to help you center yourself before you begin homework or start to take a test. If you find yourself getting tense or stressed while in the middle of your work, you can repeat this process at any time:

-Put your technology away & get into a comfortable sitting position

-Place your hands in your lap or on your desk

-Open your ears to the sounds you notice and allow yourself to be in the room, right here, right now

-Take five breaths, just as they already are, not trying to change your breaths in any way

-Take your next breath and picture ease and peace coming in

-See yourself taking your entire test or doing all of your homework assignment with ease

-Imagine yourself gently putting down your pencil or pen when you are done and congratulate yourself for your effort and for having tried your best.

Can you think of another strategy that could be helpful to bringing balance and help you get your work done?

Test Taking Tips for Reducing Test Anxiety

- Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce test-taking anxiety
- Space out your studying over a few days or weeks and continually review class material
- Don't wait until the night before to learn everything
- Try to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for the test and during the test
- Exercising a few days before the test to help reduce stress
- Get a good nights sleep before the test so that you are alert
- Show up to class early so you won't have to worry about being late
- Stay relaxed and confident. If you begin to get nervous, take a few deep breaths to relax and slowly get back to the test
- Read the directions slowly and carefully
- If you don't understand the directions on the test, ask the teacher to explain it to you
- Write down important formulas, facts, definitions and keywords in the margin first so you wont worry about forgetting them
- Do the simple questions first to help build up your confidence for the harder questions
- Don't worry about how fast other people finish their test; just concentrate on your own test
- If you don't know a question; skip it for the time being and come back to it later if you have time...remember...you don't always have to get every question right to do well on a test
- Focus on the question at hand; don't let you mind wander to other things
- Keep a positive attitude throughout the whole test; and if you feel nervous take a few breaths to relax