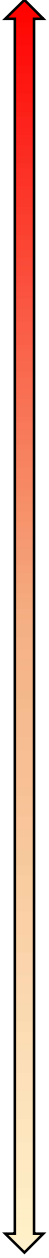


Intensity of anxiety and choosing methods

The intensity of anxiety can vary greatly from moment to moment. Mild anxiety looks and feels different than severe anxiety and you need different regulation methods for different levels and symptoms of anxiety.

Below are some general principles for selecting methods based on the intensity of your anxiety. The most important thing is to listen to yourself and find methods that work for you by trying out many different methods. You can make notes of methods that work for you on the next page.



Extreme anxiety: freezing, dissociation, "fake death"

The freeze reaction activates when the situation seems so agonizing or dangerous that fighting or fleeing are not options. You feel nothing; it feels unreal, empty, like you are outside of yourself. You need methods that can bring you back to this moment, without hurting yourself. E.g going through your body's boundaries by dry brushing, activating yourself by throwing a ball, grounding by stomping, getting back to moving by eye movement exercises.

Severe anxiety

Fight or flight reaction. Strong bodily reactions, e.g hyperventilation. Nearly intolerable levels of anxiety that could prompt to take self-harming action. You are no longer likely to succeed in calming yourself down by thinking, so you need methods that are based on the body and senses. E.g strong flavours, cold water, intense exercise. Use different combinations of methods!

Moderate anxiety

Your body's stress reaction intensifies. Various bodily symptoms, such as tightness on the chest, upset stomach. Familiar distressing thoughts are looping in your head. Irritability, restlessness, difficulties with concentration. You need methods that can calm you down and break the cycle of anxiety. E.g pursed lip breathing, intense physical exercise or other kind of exercise, an acupuncture mat, finger exercises.

Mild anxiety

Anxiety begins to "creep in." You may notice familiar distressing bodily sensations, thought loops or a sensory experience that induces anxiety. Anxiety demands attention, but you can still think of other things too. Methods that allow you to let anxiety "flush through" may be useful. Also, methods that help you shift attention elsewhere and calm down are helpful. E.g calming breathing exercises, stretching, mindfulness, shifting attention to the senses.

No anxiety or very mild anxiety

You feel normal, neutral, good. You need methods that promote and maintain your wellbeing, a sense of control and capability, and methods that bring meaning to your life. Practise anxiety management methods in case of a dire situation. Act in accordance with your values, take care of your health. Maintaining your health will help you manage your anxiety.

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