

MANAGING ANXIETY

40 Ways To Calm Yourself



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
40 Ways To Calm Anxiety	2
Final Thoughts	10

Disclaimer

This publication is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice.

Medical advice should always be obtained from a qualified medical professional for any health conditions or symptoms associated with them.

Every possible effort has been made in preparing and researching this material.

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Introduction

The world that we inhabit is one of constant communication, excess working hours, and high stress. So, it's no wonder that so many Americans are struggling through each day, just trying to cope with the anxieties they face.

Just picture your morning, when the alarm goes off – what do you do? Obviously, you make that infernal racket stop, but from there, what do you do? Is your first impulse to check your emails, open social media apps or read the news?

We can't even allow ourselves a moment to fully wake up because we plug back into the mainframe.

This isn't just for entertainment purposes either – our employers now demand more from us. We are expected to communicate outside of work, which means more hours (and unpaid ones, at that).

Your colleagues and your employer(s) expect you to be available all the time and anywhere, some of you probably can't even take a restful vacation.

What is the cost of this? Stress and anxiety.

With around 40 million Americans dealing with an anxiety disorder (<https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety>), the ability to calm yourself in these anxious moments can vastly improve your life.

Anxiety is a learned response. For those who deal with it, it can lead to hopelessness, despair, and frustration, which is why we have compiled forty ways for you to calm yourself in your anxious moments.

40 Ways To Calm Anxiety

1. 4-4-4

This is a breathing technique that has really grown in popularity over the last four years. It's fairly simple, you count to four at each stage of your breathing. So, on the inhale you count four, hold it for four, and then count another four as you exhale. You should repeat this technique three times but be sure to take a pause between each cycle. Don't wait until you're anxious to try this technique, you can practice it any time, so it helps you develop a healthy habit.

2. 3-3-3

This is completely different from the 4-4-4. First things first, take a look around yourself and name the first three things that you see. Now, name the first three sounds you notice. Lastly, move three different parts of your body, maybe your fingers, toes, and ankles. This is a mental trick that will help you center yourself and haul you back to the present when your brain is going a million miles an hour.

3. Belly Breathing

This is an alternative breathing exercise. One of the common symptoms of anxiety is difficulty breathing. The key to remaining calm is letting that breath out. So, before you even inhale for a deep breath, exhale it all out. This one involves your hands (you'd be surprised to learn how many people are breathing wrong). You place a hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.

Gently sigh through your open mouth and allow your upper body to relax as you release that initial breath. Now, take a pause with your mouth closed. Inhale for four counts through your nose, pause for four, and count to four again as you exhale through your mouth. Make sure you pause before you repeat the cycle.

4. Shut It All Out

If you start to feel anxious, you would do well to shut the world out by simply closing your eyes. It might sound a little *too* simple, and it is, but that's the point. The purpose of this exercise is to help you block out the overstimulation that has fueled your feelings of anxiousness in the first place. The idea is that it's like hitting a reset button.

5. Get Up 10

Set your alarm for ten minutes earlier than you normally rise. It might sound awful (it may even feel awful initially), but this is a really great way to start your day off right. The majority of it hit snooze, set multiple alarms, and just try to stay in bed as long as possible. Your morning sets you up for the day – a late start just leads more stress and anxiety. A morning of chaos leads to a day of anxiousness. So, rise ten minutes early and start your day off right.

6. A Happy Place

What is the most positive memory or scene that you can picture? Close your eyes and drink it in. One study found that just looking at a lovely nature scene for ten seconds, three times each day can help you re-frame your focus to feel gratitude for the good things that are happening around you and to you (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4690962/>). So, you can take that same idea and create a mental image of something that brings you joy, whatever it may be.

7. Smile

There is nothing worse than having someone else tell you to smile, especially when you are stressed out. However, when you find yourself feeling anxious, forcing yourself to smile (whether to yourself or at someone else) can do wonders for how you feel. Especially if someone else smiles back at you. It might be just the boost you were looking for.

8. No Caffeine

Often, when we feel anxious, we equate it with exhaustion and reach for a cup of coffee. Don't. As delicious as it is and as nice as that energy boost is, caffeine can be a major contributor to panic attacks and anxiety. It can also send your adrenal system crazy. So, the next time you feel anxious and think coffee is a good way to deal with it – try green tea or something similar instead.

9. Close Those Tabs

Do you often feel anxious at work? Do you also have an endless array of tabs open on your desktop? If you aren't actively working on them, then *close* them. Honestly, just the sight of all of those tabs can be a reminder of just how much work you have to do. It isn't helping you focus on what you're doing, it's only creating anxiety. Only open the tabs that you need to work right now. You are not a multi-tasker and it's okay to own that.

10. Have A Snack

Now, normally when a snack is suggested, you are told to go for something healthy. We're not going to dictate the *type* of snack that you choose. What we *will* advise you on, though, is what that snack should look and feel like. Choose something that smells amazing, that has a delicious texture, and ideally, you can eat slowly and savor. Even better if it can take you back to a happy moment in your childhood. A snack that can completely take you away from your anxiety is a great way to reset.

11. Sequence It

If you feel anxious and you are worried you may experience a panic attack, then use this sequence for calm.

- Acknowledge those symptoms.
- Ground yourself by planting your feet or holding onto something.
- Put yourself in the present, panic attacks typically stem from anxiety about an event that's already happened or one that might happen.
 - Now you can implement a breathing exercise.
 - Drink a cool glass of water
 - Close your eyes
 - Count to 10
- Repeat the first steps again if you feel that this wasn't sufficient.

12. Be Present

One of the most effective ways to manage your anxiety is to focus on the present. Anxiety comes from worrying about what might happen next (or something that has already happened in the past). When you focus on the moment it changes your mindset and helps you recognize exactly what you can accomplish. If you don't know *how* to be present, then meditation is a great place to get started.

13. Mindfulness

Mindfulness and meditation are not one and the same, however, you can meditate mindfully. Mindfulness is simply a way to force you into being present in the moment *all* the time. Just think of everything you might have missed because you were busy worrying about the future (or had your face in a gadget).

14. Lemon Balm

You can find a tea, a tincture or a capsule, either way – lemon balm can help you manage symptoms of anxiety as well as sleep issues. If you are experiencing a moment of anxiousness, brew yourself a lemon balm tea and take five minutes to enjoy a bit of calm.

15. Pet Time

If you're lucky enough to have a pet or access to one, then cuddle up with one during your moments of anxiety. Ideally, lay with them for a good five minutes. Focus on their breathing as you pet them.

16. Take a Walk

Step outside and go for a nice walk in nature. You don't need to hit the mountains for a hike to enjoy the benefits of the outdoors. A stroll around a local park or just around the block should be more than enough to help you overcome a bout of anxiety.

17. Exercise

You might not have time to hit the gym or go for a long run, but just moving can help. Try some jumping jacks or even running in place. It's a great way to get a burst of endorphins that should help you overcome moments of anxiety.

18. Plan your Escape

Feeling overly anxious? Why not plan your summer vacation or a weekend outing? Just taking yourself out of the anxiety to plan a pleasant experience gives you a distraction *and* something to look forward to.

19. Laugh It Up

Listen to a comedy podcast, put a sitcom on, watch a comedy movie – whatever it takes to put some joy back into your life. The best bet is to turn to something that *always* makes you laugh.

20. Bust False Alarms

Take a moment to work through what is causing your anxiety at this moment. Just because your chest feels tight doesn't mean that it's a heart attack. Try imaging your negative thoughts as a train. Every train makes a multitude of stops, but you don't have to disembark at *every* one. So, let those negative, anxiety driven thoughts fly past those stops.

21. A Grain of Salt

No, we're not suggesting that you go for margaritas (though, they are fabulous). A lot of the anxieties that we experience are as a result of something someone else tells us. Why do you believe everything you hear?

Try to maintain a healthy level of skepticism. You're not paranoid if you question the truth of motive of information that someone else has provided you, especially if it's driving your anxiety.

22. Consider Your Future

Why not think about writing a future diary? It's a great exercise to help remove you from your anxious thoughts and feelings. Just write about what your preferred future would look like, how others will respond to you, how you will feel, how your life will have changed, and how it might benefit you and others.

23. Worry Time

This is a proactive approach. If you know that your entire day can be derailed by your anxious thoughts, then make a plan to face them head-on. Schedule in 10 minutes to battle those worries directly.

Think about when you most commonly experience anxious thoughts and plan this time for before then, it may be early in your day, around lunch or later on. At those point in time, you can take a bit of worry time.

24. Apply Compassion

You are not defined by your feelings or your thoughts. When you experience thoughts and feelings of anxiety, it's really easy to slip into self-loathing. When you feel this happening, ask whether you can handle those thoughts with compassion. As uncomfortable as it may be to experience these sensations, it's a necessary aspect of living a life without anxiety.

25. Try Lavender

Have genuine lavender essential oil handy. According to a study from Florida Atlantic University's College of Nursing, students inhaling the oil before sitting down to take an exam experienced less anxiety (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19258850>). It's crucial that you ensure the lavender oil is the real deal and not a synthetic one. Generally, authentic essential oils feature the Latin name in the ingredients list.

26. Take A Coloring Break

We don't really know *why* coloring is so relaxing. It might be because it transports back to your childhood when life was a bit simpler. Or, it could be the act itself. Either way, coloring is soothing and whether you prefer to use pencils, crayons or markers – it's a great way to calm yourself when you're feeling anxious.

27. Don't Blow It Out Of Proportion

Is your default mindset to jump to the worst-case scenario? Don't. Instead, take a moment to practice a breathing exercise. Now, ask yourself how big a deal this really is. Sometimes a simple *but did you die?* is all it takes to bring you back down to earth. There are awful things that can happen, but you *will* get through them.

You will eventually recover from a bankruptcy (hello Nicolas Cage and 50 Cent). A lost job is terrible, but you will find a new one. Broken hearts mend. None of this will kill you, so, don't go blowing it all out of proportion.

28. Just 15 More

When you feel like giving up and tapping out, just push yourself for 15 more minutes. Not only will your future self thank you for staying on top of your responsibilities but pushing through it will help you beat your anxious thoughts. You may find that battling through for 15 minutes is enough to help you keep going.

29. Get Out

It doesn't matter if you feel like it or not, just push yourself to leave the house (or office) each day. Go out and get some fresh air, grab coffee with a friend. It really doesn't matter what you do, it's all about getting out and about.

30. Squeeze

Get yourself a stress ball and when you feel anxious, get squeezing.

31. Find A Distraction

Meditation is wonderful, but sometimes your anxiety is too great to focus on the act. When it comes to this point, a distraction is a must. Find something to do that will help you bust those anxious thoughts. Even better if it's something productive like cleaning out your junk drawer or tackling your glove compartment.

32. Exaggerate

This one may seem counter-intuitive; however, we want you to take your greatest fear *and* exaggerate it. Talk through that fear with someone else, be dramatic in your details, talk about your emotions. Then, tell it again, but take it even more OTT. Then, do it again (and again).

By this point, you will start to hear just how silly (perhaps boring) that it sounds. Your fear started out as a fear of being laid off, then you exaggerated it to include a home repossession, the end of your relationship, homelessness, and being eaten by rabid dogs. Ridiculous, right?

33. Adopt A Mantra

It doesn't matter what mantra you choose, as long as it works for you. You may find that you need a multitude of them for different situations. When you are feeling frustrated you may want to repeat the phrase *it'll all work out*. If you feel under pressure a mantra of *'take it slow'* may be more appropriate. If you are feeling down on yourself then *'I am a kind person'* may be ideal.

34. Shades of Gray

Are you a black and white thinker? Some people may prefer it, but when you can't see the shades of gray, then you are likely going to be someone who struggles with anxiety. When you find yourself feeling anxious, take a look at what is driving it and introduce a gray area.

35. Take The Pressure Off

Are you feeling anxious about a presentation, an interview or another big event? Look, you are the only one obsessed with producing a perfect performance. The audience, the interviewer, your colleagues... none of them are going to care if you slip up. Don't put so much pressure on yourself to be perfect – it doesn't exist.

36. Get Musical

Pick up a guitar, sit down at the piano or fire up the stereo. However, you prefer to enjoy music, do it. Use your favorite streaming service to create custom playlists that fit your mood. An anxiety busting list is a *must*. Choose music that boosts your energy, increases happiness, and just makes you feel better.

37. Write It Out

Talking is good, but sometimes sharing your deepest thoughts and feelings is awkward. You may not be comfortable sharing or unable to articulate what you're feeling. So, grab a journal and write it all out. You don't need to worry about your spelling and punctuation.

In fact, you don't really need to worry about writing complete sentences either. It's just a great method to write all of those negative thoughts down and get them out of your head. Once you're finished, you can walk away or even create an action plan based on what you've recorded.

38. An Object To Center

This object should be something that you can have with you at all times. One that you can focus on when you feel anxious or energy. Anxiety saps your energy by fueling irrational thoughts. So, choose your object when you're in a state of calm and use it when you're anxious. Touch it to calm your thoughts. It's simply a reminder that you are not your anxiety.

39. Pressure Points

Acupuncture and massage therapy are great for helping relieve anxiety symptoms, but you can't always afford or find the time to enjoy them. Instead, you can DIY acupressure. There are different areas on your body that you can use your fingers to apply pressure and provide relief and relaxation. Just between your eyebrows, an inch below the base of your skull, and the area between your thumb and index finger.

40. Get Help

If you are experiencing anxiety often and it's impacting your relationships, work or life, then don't deal with it on your own. Visit your primary care physician to discuss your anxiety issues. They may be able to prescribe medication to help you deal with it or offer additional advice that will help you manage your anxiety.

Final Thoughts

It's all well and good to read advice on anxiety, but ultimately, none of it will matter unless you put it into practice. There may be methods that help you more than others so, don't give up after just trying one or two.

Take your time and work with the list until you find the options that truly work for you. If your friend has recommended something and it doesn't work for you, don't lose heart. You will find what works for you.