

Anxiety Coping Skills Cheat Sheet



Six fast, evidence-backed ways to calm an anxious moment - no app required.

1 PICK ONE SKILL

2 DO IT FULLY, NOT HALFWAY

3 REPEATING IT IS NORMAL

1 The Physiological Sigh

FASTEST RESET • 1 MIN



- Inhale through your nose - then, at the top, sip in one more short breath.
- Exhale through your mouth, slowly, until you're completely empty.
- Repeat 3-5 times. Let the exhale be longer each round.

WHY IT WORKS

The double inhale re-opens tiny air sacs in your lungs so the long exhale can offload carbon dioxide fast - the quickest built-in brake your nervous system has.

2 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

SPIRALING THOUGHTS • 2 MIN



- Name **5** things you can see, **4** you can feel, **3** you can hear, **2** you can smell, **1** you can taste.
- Say them out loud if you can - slower than feels natural.
- Stuck on a sense? Skip it and keep counting down.

WHY IT WORKS

Anxiety lives in imagined futures. Flooding your senses with the present starves the spiral of the attention it needs to keep going.

3 The Cold Reset

RACING HEART • 30 SEC



- Splash cold water on your face, or hold something cold to your cheeks and eyes for about 30 seconds.
- No sink around? Run cold water over your wrists, or step into cool air.
- Breathe out slowly while you do it.

WHY IT WORKS

Cold on the face triggers the dive reflex, which slows your heart rate within seconds - biology you can borrow on demand.

4 Name It to Tame It

HARSH INNER TALK • 3 MIN



- Finish this sentence, out loud or on paper: *"I'm having the thought that..."*
- Ask: would I ever say this to a friend in my situation?
- Rewrite it one notch kinder - and one notch truer.

WHY IT WORKS

Putting a feeling into words shifts activity from your brain's alarm center to its thinking cortex. Labeling it literally turns the volume down.

5 The Worry Window

ALL-DAY WORRIERS • 10 MIN/DAY



- Give worry an appointment: ten minutes, same time every day.
- When a worry shows up early, jot one keyword and tell it: *"You're booked for 7pm."*
- At worry time, worry properly. When time's up, stand up and stop.

WHY IT WORKS

Your brain re-raises alarms it thinks you're ignoring. Postponing - not suppressing - teaches it the message was received.

6 Move It Out of Your Body

RESTLESS TENSION • 2 MIN



- Do 60-120 seconds of anything physical: a brisk walk, stairs, wall push-ups.
- Feeling silly is fine - shake out your arms and legs like a swimmer before a race.
- Finish with one slow exhale and drop your shoulders.

WHY IT WORKS

Anxiety is mobilized energy - adrenaline prepping muscles for a sprint that never comes. Spend the energy and your body reads "threat over."