

Distraction Techniques for Anxiety



A menu of 15 ways to point your attention somewhere else while the wave passes - sorted by the kind of busy your brain needs.

READ THIS FIRST • DISTRACTION IS A SKILL, NOT A CHEAT

Therapists teach distraction on purpose. When anxiety is running too hot to think straight, reasoning with it mostly feeds it - parking your attention somewhere else until the intensity drops is exactly the right move, not a failure of courage. **The one rule that makes it work: once you're steadier, come back to whatever set the alarm off.**



Mental LOUD, LOOPING THOUGHTS • ZERO EQUIPMENT

Backwards sevens

Count down from 100 in steps of 7. It has to be a little hard - hard is what holds attention.

A-to-Z countries

Name a country for every letter of the alphabet. House rule: you may skip X with dignity.

Redesign your room

Rebuild your bedroom in your head. Move the bed, repaint, decide where the lamp goes.



Physical BUZZING, RESTLESS, CAN'T-SIT-STILL ENERGY

Fast walk

Ten minutes, brisker than comfortable. Outside if you can.

Cold water on wrists

Thirty seconds per wrist. Count the seconds down out loud.

20 wall push-ups

Hands flat on a wall, slow on the way down. Feel your arms work.

Reorganize one shelf

One shelf, not the whole room. Done beats perfect.



Absorbing WHEN YOU HAVE TEN MINUTES OR MORE

A genuinely hard puzzle

Jigsaw, sudoku, a tricky game level - hard enough that no spare attention is left for worry.

10-minute cleaning sprint

Set a timer, pick one zone, race it. The countdown is what makes it absorbing instead of a chore.

Cook something with steps

A recipe you have to keep reading while you make it. Measuring and stirring keep your hands booked.



Social WHEN BEING ALONE WITH IT MAKES IT LOUDER

Call someone and ask about THEIR day

Keep the spotlight on them: real questions, real follow-ups. Someone else's Tuesday is a surprisingly good exit ramp.

Help somebody with something small

Carry a bag, fix a phone setting, water a neighbor's plants. Helping is the strongest distractor there is - it points your whole brain outward.



Creative QUIETER, SOFTER, SAD-SCARED MOODS

Doodle to one song

Pen keeps moving for the whole song. No goal, no judging, stop when it ends.

Narrate the room

Describe where you're sitting the way a novelist would: the light, the textures, what the chair has seen.

Harmonize with the fridge

Hum along with a fan or fridge, then slide your note up and down until it turns into harmony.

FACT BOX • KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

Distraction vs avoidance

Same puzzle, same walk, same playlist. What separates them is the contract you make with yourself.

DISTRACTION RETURNS

It surfs the peak, then circles back. "I'll answer that email once this wave settles" - and the email gets answered, by a calmer you.

AVOIDANCE NEVER DOES

The wave passes and the thing stays unopened, growing scarier every day it waits. If you never go back, the tool has changed hands.