Managing Anxiety in a Time of Uncertainty

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Objectives

- Physiological response to stress
- Strategies to shift your thinking to better manage anxiety
- Values exploration
- The importance of sleep
- Grounding techniques
Expand Your Window of Tolerance
How Your Body Responds to Stress

What Happens When We Remain in a Prolonged State of Anxiety?

- Chronic elevated state of alertness interferes with:
  - Ability to return to balance
  - Regulating our emotions
  - Making rational decisions
  - Engaging with others
Emotional Arousal is Inversely Related to Judgment

[Diagram showing the relationship between emotional arousal, adrenaline/heart rate, and judgment quality]

Rational Mind
- Approaches knowledge intellectually
- Thinks logically and uses past experience
- Uses facts and research as well as planning
- Focused

Wise Mind
- Intuitive thinking
- Arrangement and balance between Rational and Emotional Mind
- Living Mindfully

Emotional Mind
- Reason and logical thinking difficult
- Uses only emotions to make decisions
- Reactive
- Tells us how we are really doing
- Uses core psychological needs

(online diagramming & design) creately.com
Why is it so Hard to Get Work Done?

- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Difficulty starting tasks
- Task shifting

What It’s Really Like to Work at Home
Strategies

- Focus on outcomes
- Be realistic in response to pressure to produce
- Manage expectations
- Set boundaries
Intentional Connections

Cognitive Model

Situation  Thought  Emotion  Behavior
Neuroplasticity

- Replace an old habit with a new habit
- Fire together, wire together

Cow Paths
You are the Boss of Your Thoughts

• You are not your thoughts

• Not all thoughts are true
Notice Your Triggers

- Pay attention to warning signs, physical or mental.
- Have you felt this way in the past? When? Why?
- Do a reality check.
- Create a new narrative.
The Power of Mindset

- Acknowledge
- Accept
- Pivot

How to Sit with Discomfort

I notice my resistance
My body relaxes
I witness the sensations
I think...
"Oh, I feel...
It's OK, you're welcome here"
I resist it
The feeling passes
I feel something
I numb
The feeling persists
Do what works for you

- I feel better when __________________.

- I feel worse when __________________.

- Human connection builds stress resilience.
  - Tend and befriend
  - Enhances empathy and intuition
  - Builds courage
  - Good for cardiovascular health
  - Recover more quickly from stress
Connecting with Others

- Zoom, FaceTime or WhatsApp
- Exercise together
- Watch movies or play games
- Take a virtual class - dance, music, gym, spin
- Sing or play music together

Grief and Loss

- It is ok to grieve what could have been.
- There is no hierarchy of loss.
- Feelings of grief come in waves.
WHEN YOUR VALUES ARE CLEAR TO YOU, MAKING DECISIONS BECOMES EASIER.

Roy Disney
American Executive

What are your values?
The list of values below is not exhaustive, but it’s designed to get you thinking about your own. Which values on the list are most important to you? Pick your top three and if something comes to mind that is not on the list, write it down.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Faith/Religion</th>
<th>Mindfulness</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adventure</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Openness</td>
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<td>Art or Music</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Patience</td>
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<td>Athletics</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Peace/Non-violence</td>
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<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Personal Growth</td>
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<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>Pets/Animals</td>
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<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Hard Work</td>
<td>Positive Influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td>Practicality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Problem-Solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Helping Others</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Resourcefulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Honour</td>
<td>Self-Compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>Self-Reliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Simplicity/Merit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Strength</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Tradition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>Trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Willingness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Action</td>
<td>Lifelong Learning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
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</table>
6 Tips to Reduce Anxiety

1. Turn “what if” into “then what?”
2. Set reasonable limits on your TV and internet news consumption
3. Be present in the here and now
4. Spend time in nature
5. Exercise
6. Maintain a routine

Turn “What if?” into “Then what?”

- Turn “what if?” into “then what?”
- Avoid ruminating
- Make a plan
- Share your plan
- Put your plan aside
Set Limits on News Consumption

Be Present
Spend Time in Nature

- Benefits of nature:
  - Stress reduction
  - Improved cognitive functioning
  - Enhanced self-confidence
  - Improved immune function
  - Improved mood
  - Lower blood pressure
  - Lower cortisol (stress hormone)
  - Improved sleep
Exercise

- Benefits of exercise:
  - Improves mood
  - Decreases anxiety
  - Decreases depression
  - Improves self-esteem
  - Good for physical health
  - Teaches us that our behavior matters

Maintain a Routine

- Structure is helpful in times of uncertainty
- Makes our internal lives predictable
- Creates normalcy, certainty and comfort in day-to-day activities
- Gives a sense of agency

- 7:00 a.m. - Wake up, stretch, take care of kids/animals
- 7:30 a.m. - Breakfast and family time (technology free)
- 8:30 a.m. - Work and check on updates with small breaks every 30 minutes or so
- 12:00 p.m. - Lunch break, get fresh air, stretch & exercise
- 1:00 p.m. - Work with breaks every 30 minutes, check in with co-workers
- 5:00 p.m. - Dinner and screen break! Call a friend, family, or loved one
- 7:00 p.m. - Self care time
The Importance of Kindness

Kindness to yourself
- Listening to music
- Reading a book
- Setting boundaries for yourself
- Try to avoid comparing yourself with others
Kindness Toward Others

• We are at our best when we are helping others.
  *Margaret Mead*

• Kindness to others
  o Deliver groceries
  o Mail a letter
  o Volunteer to shop
  o Brighten someone’s day

The Power of Sleep

Three Tips to Improve sleep

1. Sleep Hygiene
2. Don’t check the news before bed
3. Practice progressive muscle relaxation
SIMPLE GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

If you’re feeling anxious or worried, bring your attention back to the current moment with this simple grounding exercise. Notice the following around you:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

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Conclusion

- Stay home and stay safe
- Practise self-care
- Do what works best for you
- Connect with others
- Hunt for the good stuff
- Ask for help if needed
References and Resources

• actionforhappiness.org/coping calendar.
• Anxiety Canada. https://www.anxietycanada.com/
• BCACC register of registered clinical counsellors – bc-counsellors.org.
• Canadian Mental Health Association – Bounce Back.
• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – sleep hygiene. cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/sleep_hygiene.html.
References and Resources

• Sentis – neuroplasticity. Youtube.com/watch?v=ELpfYCYzan.
• Vancouver Crisis Centre 1-800-784-2433, 604-872-3311.
• YouthinBC.com.
• Virtual counselling services for individuals or groups at low or no costs. A list of agencies can be found at www.cmha.bc.ca/covid-19