



Mitigating Anxiety

Practical suggestions for anxiety mitigation during a pandemic (or anytime for that matter!)

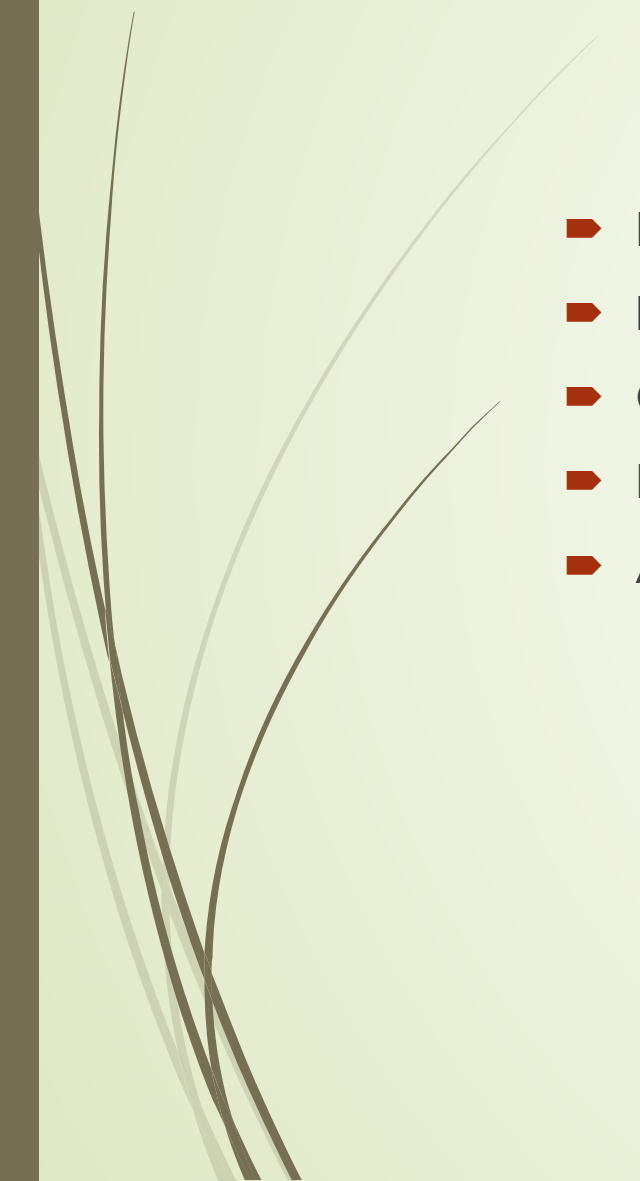



Disclosures

- No disclosures.



What is anxiety?

- ▶ Emotion we experience in our minds and bodies
 - ▶ Fear is the foundation feeling
 - ▶ Communicating a message about danger or loss
 - ▶ Response -- fight, flight, freeze
 - ▶ Anxiety is not by definition "bad"
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Anxiety equation (from “The Emotional Toolkit”, Mininni 2005)

- ▶ Anxiety = a threatening scenario + a belief that you can't cope
- ▶ We may not be able to change the scenario, but *we can change our beliefs about our ability to cope and improve our skills*
- ▶ Opportunity for growth and transformation



Brain skills and body skills

- ▶ Arbitrary distinction
 - ▶ Work in concert
 - ▶ Thoughts influence physiology influences thoughts
influence physiology...
 - ▶ Start with observing both
 - ▶ Where do I feel anxiety in my body? What stories am I
telling myself?
- 



Brain skills – Thought Shifting (The Emotional Toolkit, Mininni 2005)

- What stories am I telling myself?
- Become aware of the negative self talk (“I’m terrible at this”, “what if I mess up this talk?”, “what if the information is useless?”)
- Examine and challenge your negative assumptions (“what’s the worst thing that can happen?”, “I have gone through this in the past?”, “can I look at this as an opportunity for growth and learning?”)
- Create new, realistic, positive messages (“one step at a time”, “thinking it does not make it true”, “breathe”)
- Create an action plan (“what can I do besides worry?”, “what resources do I have at my disposal?”)
- **The best antidote to anxiety is action**



Circles of Concern, Control, Influence
(Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Covey
2013)


- <http://uthscsa.edu/gme/documents/CircleofConcern-Influence.pdf>
- Clarifies sources of anxiety
- Helps identify areas where you can take action




The Space Between

(Stimulus podcast #10, Rob Orman MD)

- ▶ Stimulus -----→ (*space between*) -----→response
- ▶ The space between is where you exercise agency
- ▶ Transformative space
- ▶ Meaningful space



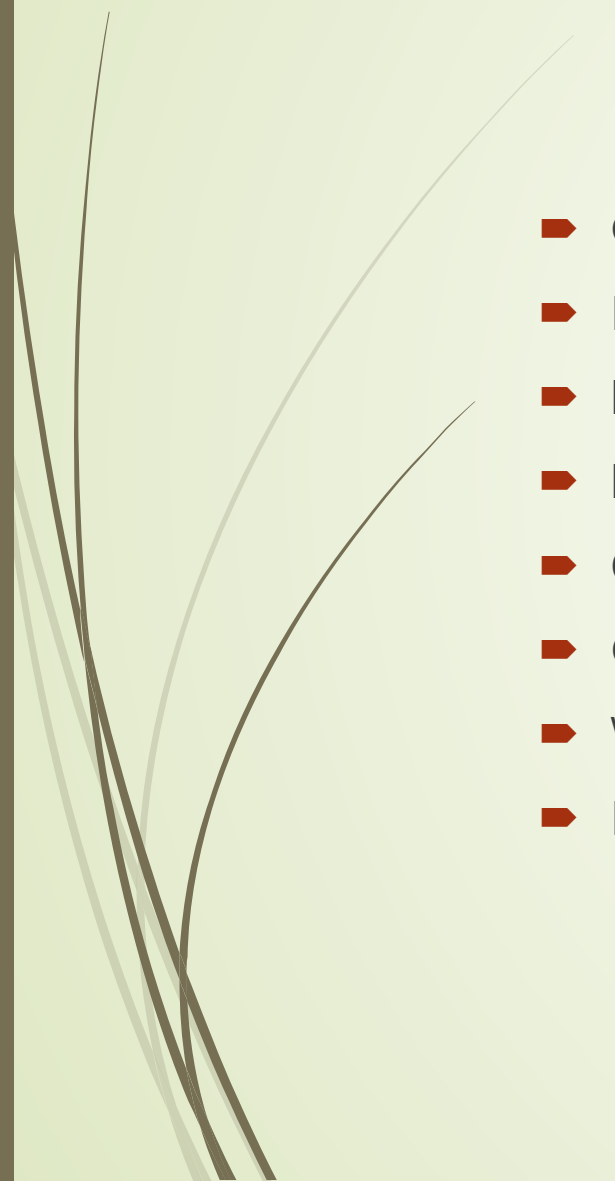
Body skills



- Designed to regulate physiology which in turn calms the “monkey mind”
- “feel the edges” (Full Catastrophe Living, Kabat-Zinn 1990)
- Guided breath work – State app
- Panoramic vision exercise – Stimulus (Rob Orman, MD) episode #5
- Physical exercise
- Nature bathing
- Hands-on creative activities



Creativity as an outlet

- 
- Cooking
 - Drawing/coloring
 - Music
 - Puzzles
 - Origami
 - Gardening
 - Writing
 - Dancing




Putting it all together – A personal resiliency plan

- ▶ https://www.acponline.org/system/files/documents/about_acp/chapters/or/resilience_building_plan_worksheet.pdf



Books

- Man's Search for Meaning
 - Full Catastrophe Living
 - Life is in the Transitions: Mastering Change at Any Age
 - The Emotional Toolkit
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Podcasts, Apps, Websites

- ▶ Stimulus with Rob Orman, MD (episodes 2, 4, 5, and 10)
- ▶ Happier with Gretchen Rubin
- ▶ State (guided breathing app)
- ▶ Motivation (inspirational quote app)
- ▶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/16/well/mind/managing-life-transitions.html?referringSource=articleShare>



Laughter is the best medicine

- ▶ <https://www.oprahmag.com/entertainment/g32256570/best-comedy-podcasts/?slide=25>
- ▶ YouTube (Saturday Night Live skits, cute animal skits)



Silver linings

- A newfound freedom?
- Shedding of something no longer needed?
- Finding meaning