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”
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](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 \rightarrow (\text{space between}) \rightarrow \text{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
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)
Laughter is the best medicine

- YouTube (Saturday Night Live skits, cute animal skits)
Silver linings

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