

sage grazer THERAPY

GUIDE TO
- COPING WITH ANXIETY -

CHANGE ALWAYS
COMES WITH
CHALLENGES



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What is anxiety?

Anxiety is fear.

Fear of the unknown, the intangible, the things that do not exist in our present environment. Anxiety is fear of things that we hold in our minds like imagined scenarios that have yet to play out in real life. To understand and learn how to manage your anxiety, you want to start by identifying the underlying root of your fear.



Sage Grazer, LCSW

We can do this by “unpacking” your anxiety...

Here’s an example of what that might look like:

1. **Identify the surface level thought or worry:** *I’m anxious that I don’t even have a partner yet and all of my friends are already married and starting the kids phase.*
2. **Ask yourself why you’re stressed:** *I’m stressed because I feel so far behind all my peers and it feels impossible to catch up.*
3. **Understanding the underlying fear:** *I’m afraid that if my life doesn’t look like that of my friends, they won’t include me and I will be left behind.*

Notice that the core, underlying fear is really about your friendships and a fear of losing those connections. When you understand what the underlying fear is, you can address the root of the problem rather than spinning your wheels ruminating about the surface level anxiety. In terms of problem solving, you can take mindful steps to maintain your connections, making time for each other with intention.

There is one thing we know for certain: life is filled with uncertainty, or as it has been said, **the only constant in life is change.**

We don’t have control over that fact, but we can choose how to adjust and adapt to those changes, and the narrative we tell ourselves as we do it.

I've outlined some common underlying themes that I've noticed in my years as a therapist and a human, and how to begin to work through them.

Underlying Fear #1: Fear of Judgement

Fear of negative judgement or disapproval is one of the most commonly shared experiences and comes from a survival instinct that drives our desire to be accepted as part of the group (think safety in numbers).

While it's not uncommon to fear judgment, it's important to remember that we all inherently judge constantly (that is how humans interpret the world and determine what is safe and what is not). So when you are preoccupied by fears of judgment, ask yourself this:

Who's opinion really matters?

Know that it's human nature to want to be part of the group but also know that we are in times where people can disapprove, feel disappointed & disagree AND still be okay. You can tolerate not having those people's approval all of the time.

The answer to this question relies on your OWN opinion and what's truly important to you.

Underlying Fear #2: Fear of Change

Change, even good change, is often met with anxiety. We naturally fear uncertainty and change is synonymous with uncertainty. Learning to accept the uncertainty of life and the things that are out of our control will give you great relief from anxiety. Trying to assert control over things that are out of your control is a Sisyphean task and a certain recipe for misery. **Knowing and accepting that which we cannot control is one of the great tasks of life.**

Change also inherently comes with loss, loss of what used to be, and even a good loss is still a loss. It's normal to fear loss. Cope with it by recognizing the loss, honoring, processing, and letting it go (when you're ready).

Underlying Fear #3: Fear of Failure

Nobody wants to fail, but if we didn't allow ourselves to fail and try again, we'd never learn to walk. We'd fall down and never get back up again. Failure is OKAY, it's a part of life and a part of growth.

We've all experienced some hesitance to jump into something new knowing that we're not going to be good at it instantly. In life, it's the things that we don't do that we tend to regret most, not those that we do do.

Here's something important for you to remember whenever you are feeling anxious: YOU have the power to reframe highly anxiety provoking situations as opportunities to grow. Recognize that the discomfort that may (or may not) arise in the situation IS survivable. You can tolerate it, and maybe even come out the other side stronger and more capable.

**If you've experienced any of these fears, welcome to the club,
you're human.**

A great goal would be to allow yourself the time for this mental health check-in, and to conduct this introspective activity of unpacking your anxieties. Then, you can begin to understand where those fears lie, and how you can address them.

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

FOR YOUR TOOLKIT

Grounding Techniques

Grounding techniques are great tools to use when you're experiencing physical & mental signs of anxiety. These techniques engage your mind and body, so you can begin to move away from an activated state of worry, triggered in the fear-based area of your brain, and get into a more centered space and engage in something self-soothing.

You can use these techniques at any time, from any location. It's good to practice these techniques in times when you're not highly triggered or activated so that you can start building that grounding muscle.

There are 3 main ways to ground yourself:

Engage Your Senses

Look around you, what do you see, smell, hear?

You can try the **5-4-3-2-1 exercise**:

- Name **5** things you can see
- Find **4** things you can feel (notice the textures of the materials around you, temperature of the room, touch the objects in your reach, etc)
- Identify **3** things you can hear (traffic noise or birds outside, fan or heater running)
- Notice **2** things you can smell
- Focus on **1** thing you can taste (have a candy or mint or just notice what you taste)

Engage Your Mind

- Identify all of the purple (or any color of your choosing) objects that you can see
- Focus on your breath, or an activity like a mindful walking exercise

Engage Your Body

- Do a body scan from bottom to top - *Tense and release your toes, your feet, your calves, your core, your hands, and beyond.*
- Change your temperature - *Take a sip of cold water. How does it feel, what is the temperature? Notice the cooling sensation of the water as it moves through your body.*

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I work with clients one on one to help them master their anxiety to regain control of their lives and get out of the pattern of overthinking.

Get started with me today!

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