



Anxiety Coping Skills Guide

Anxiety is a natural nervous system response, but it can become overwhelming when it gets stuck in an overdrive loop. This guide provides actionable, evidence-based somatic and cognitive tools to help anchor your mind and body when feelings of panic or worry escalate.

1. Somatic Regulation: The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Method

When anxiety spikes, your brain defaults to threat detection. Bringing your awareness strictly to your immediate physical environment can disrupt this threat loop.

- ☐ **5 things you can SEE:** Look around and note details.
- ☐ **4 things you can TOUCH:** Notice immediate physical textures.
- ☐ **3 things you can HEAR:** Listen carefully to distant sounds.
- ☐ **2 things you can SMELL:** Try to catch subtle surrounding scents.
- ☐ **1 thing you can TASTE:** Focus on current taste details or take a sip of water.

2. Down-Regulating the Nervous System: Box Breathing

Directly signals your vagus nerve to slow down your heart rate and shift out of fight-or-flight mode.

Step 1: Inhale

Through your nose
(4s).

Step 2: Hold

Suspend breath
gently (4s).

Step 3: Exhale

Release through
mouth (4s).

Step 4: Rest

Hold empty at bottom
(4s).

3. Cognitive Restructuring: Thought Challenging

Anxiety often whispers worst-case scenarios that feel like absolute facts. Use these frames to review recent stressors:

What is the objective evidence supporting this thought?

What is the objective evidence contradicting it?
