

Healthy Coping Skills for Anxiety

Evidence-based tools you can use today

Understand what's happening

Anxiety is your body's protective response to a perceived threat. The physical sensations — racing heart, tight chest, restless thoughts — are uncomfortable but not dangerous. Naming what you feel is the first step toward calming it.

In-the-moment tools

- **Box breathing:** inhale 4 · hold 4 · exhale 4 · hold 4 (repeat 4 rounds).
- **5-4-3-2-1 grounding:** name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.
- **Cold water reset:** splash cold water on your face or hold an ice cube to shift your nervous system.
- **Movement:** a 2-minute walk or shoulder rolls release stored tension.
- **Name it to tame it:** say aloud, "I'm having an anxious thought right now."

Daily habits that lower baseline anxiety

- Consistent sleep and wake times (aim for 7–9 hours).
- Limit caffeine after noon and alcohol in the evening.
- 20+ minutes of movement most days.
- Protein and complex carbs at each meal to steady blood sugar.
- 5–10 minutes of mindfulness, prayer, or journaling.

Cognitive tools

- **Thought record:** situation → automatic thought → evidence for/against → balanced thought.
- **Worry window:** schedule 15 minutes/day to worry on purpose, then set it aside.
- **Values check:** ask, "What matters most right now?" and take one small aligned action.

When to reach out

If anxiety is interfering with work, sleep, or relationships — or if you're avoiding things you used to enjoy — a professional evaluation can help clarify what's going on and open the door to effective treatment.