

ANXIETY IMPACT EXERCISE INSTRUCTIONS

Feared event:

Automatic thoughts related to the feared event:

Assuming the worst happens, what are some unhealthy ways you might cope:

Rate your anxiety from 0-10 (0 is no anxiety and 10 is the worst you have felt): ____
Rate the probability of the event from 0-10 (0 is not likely and 10 is full certainty): ____

Truth statement you want to remember considering the feared event:

Possible truth-informed ways you might cope:

Alternate possible outcomes of the feared event based on the truth statement:

Rate your anxiety from 0-10 (0 is no anxiety and 10 is the worst you have felt): ____
Rate the probability of the event from 0-10 (0 is not likely and 10 is full certainty): ____

Reflection:

How has focusing on feared events impacted your ability to experience peace? What could shift if you leaned into your truth statement more regularly?

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Script for implementing the exercise:

Most of the time when people worry about they consistently predict unreasonable or catastrophic outcomes. This is called catastrophizing. When this happens, anxiety begins to have a significant impact on our life. One significant impact is that anxiety makes you forget the truth that can anchor you. Anxiety causes you to accentuate circumstances and you begin to look for ways to cope with whatever might possibly happen. This can lead to increased anxiety and the process continues.

It is helpful to take time to explore the impact anxiety is having on your life by considering the possible outcomes. Predicted outcomes are often based on automatic thoughts. Let's explore those together.

On the first line write out something you worry about that causes your stress to increase and anxious thoughts and feelings rise. For example, maybe you worry about your teenaged driver going out at night, or a relationship ending, or getting a terrible sickness like cancer.

On the next line write out the automatic thoughts that come easily to your mind when you think of that feared event. These are the thoughts related to the feared events. Such as, she'll get in an accident, he might be unfaithful or leave me, I might die or live in pain. Or there will be suffering, sorrow, pain, blood, doctors, embarrassment, and betrayal, etc.

Next, assuming the worst does happen, what are some unhealthy ways you may cope? (isolation, numb feelings, grasp for control, lash out in anger, etc.)

Considering the feared event and the thoughts related, rate your anxiety right now:

Rate your anxiety from 0-10 (0 is no anxiety and 10 is the worst you have felt): ____
Rate the probability of the event from 0-10 (0 is not likely and 10 is full certainty): ____

Now think about a truth statement you want to remember considering the feared event. What truth about who God is do you want to hold on to? What gospel truth do you want to believe? What promise of God can you make personal despite your fear? Write it out in the form of a truth statement.

Next write out how you want to live considering this truth? What actions will you take to cope that embraces that truth statement?

Lastly, what are some other possible outcomes that could happen rather than the feared event. Or, even if the feared event occurs, what might the outcome be if you trusted the truth statement?

Now rate your anxiety one last time. How are you feeling right now?

Rate your anxiety from 0-10 (0 is no anxiety and 10 is the worst you have felt): ____
Rate the probability of the event from 0-10 (0 is not likely and 10 is full certainty): ____

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Take some time to go over the exercise. Some questions to ask the person who completed the exercise:

- How easy was it to come up with a feared event? What does that say about how common anxiety is in your life? More or less than you expected?
- What did the first part of the exercise reveal about your automatic thoughts or coping?
- In the first box of ratings how close or far apart were the two numbers? What does that say to you?
- How easy was it for you to come up with a truth statement? Does that truth always feel true?
- How did truth statement change the way you would cope?
- What does this say about the impact of what you tell yourself?
- How did the truth statement change the possible outcomes even if the feared event did happen?
- Did your rating numbers go up/down/or stay the same? There is no right or wrong answer for this. Instead get curious about the numbers and what it might mean if they went up/down/or stay the same.
- What did this exercise reveal about the impact of anxiety on your life.

The last reflection questions are for additional reflection in groups or individuals.

Take some time to reflect with others in a small group over the following questions.

Reflection:

How has focusing on feared events impacted your ability to experience peace? What could shift if you leaned into your truth statement more regularly?