

ANXIETY

Care Guide

A practical reference for biblical counselors to use in-session, utilizing a three-part process to examine the struggle, encourage in Scripture and execute through sanctification.

Examine the Struggle Use these questions and observations to assess anxiety's nature, severity, themes, and triggers.

Emotional & Cognitive

- Persistent worry, dread, or a sense of impending danger
- Difficulty controlling worry spirals or rumination
- Racing thoughts or difficulty concentrating
- Hypervigilance—always on edge
- Fear of losing control or of catastrophic outcomes
- Past traumatic experiences

What does your anxiety typically say to you?

What are you most afraid will happen?

When is your anxiety at its highest and what leads up to it?

What do you do to try and feel safe or in control?

Behavioral & Relational

- Avoidance of anxiety-provoking situations, people, or responsibilities
- Restlessness, fidgeting, or inability to relax
- Overworking, overplanning, or perfectionistic attempts at control
- Reassurance-seeking (repeated questions, checking, spiritual over-confession)

Where do you feel the most pressure in your life right now?

How does anxiety affect your relationships or responsibilities?

What do you do to try to resist, manage, or avoid anxiety?

When you become anxious, what do you do?

Spiritual

- Fear-based view of God
- Compulsive prayer or Bible reading driven by anxiety rather than devotion
- Difficulty trusting God's character or promises
- Obsessive fear of judgment, failure, or disappointing God

What do you believe about God's character and promises?

How does anxiety affect your view of God?

Do you believe that your anxiety is sinful? Why or why not?

What do you believe God expects of you in moments of fear? Why?

Physical & Safety

- Muscle tension, headaches, stomach issues, nausea
- Sleep disruption: difficulty falling asleep, early waking
- Heart palpitations, trembling, dizziness, sweating
- Panic attacks, shortness of breath, chest tightness

Do you ever feel so overwhelmed that you fear you might lose control?

Have you ever had thoughts of self-harm during panic or dread?

(Use standard protocol if suicidal ideation is present.)

How does your body respond when you're anxious?

Encourage in Scripture

Scriptures for Counseling & How to Use Them (Aim: reassurance, grounding truth, calling to trust, helping them reinterpret fear, and directing their heart toward Christ rather than control.)

Psalm 56:3 — “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.”

Use for: Validating fear while directing trust.
How: Shows that fear is not failure; trust happens in fear, not after fear disappears.

Psalm 46 — “Be still, and know that I am God.”

Use for: Replacing frantic striving with resting in God’s presence.
How: Highlight God as refuge; especially helpful for catastrophic thinking and hypervigilance.

Matthew 6:25-34 — “Do not be anxious about your life.”

Use for: Redirecting obsessive worry toward kingdom trust.
How: Emphasize the Father’s care, not as a rebuke but as an invitation into childlike dependence.

Philippians 4:4-9 — *Prayer, supplication, thanksgiving, peace*

Use for: Reorienting anxious thoughts and reframing mental habits.
How: Use it to build the threefold rhythm: pray honestly, practice thanksgiving, and meditate on what is true.

1 Peter 5:6-7 — “Cast your anxieties on Him.”

Use for: Relieving the burden of self-sufficiency.
How: Point out the order: humble yourself first, then turn your heart in trust to God, depending on Him to help resolve the issues. Control and anxiety often stem from self-exaltation without realizing it.

Isaiah 41:10 — “Fear not, for I am with you.”

Use for: Strengthening identity and presence-based courage.
How: Use for counselees who believe they face fears alone.

John 14:27 — “My peace I give to you.”

Use for: Grounding peace not in circumstances but in Christ himself.
How: Helpful when counselees chase safety through control.

Hebrews 13:5-6 — “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Use for: Addressing fear of abandonment or failure.
How: Use with counselees whose anxiety is relationally rooted.

Romans 8:31-39 — “Nothing can separate us from God’s love.”

Use for: Deep assurance when anxiety flows from fear of judgment or failure.
How: Bring the counselee back to the unshakable certainty of Christ’s love.

Execute through Sanctification

Biblical Counseling Growth Assignments. These assignments are practical, paced for anxious individuals, and designed to gently reshape rhythms, beliefs, and habits.

Thought Reframing Card “Catch-Challenge-Confess-Comfort”

Assignment:

- Catch the thought - Write one recurring anxious thought each day.
- Challenge the thought - Challenge it with a relevant Scripture.
- Confess the truth - Confess what is true about God and yourself.
- Comfort your soul - Apply a comfort-oriented truth (e.g., Matt. 11:28-30; Phil. 4:8).

Controlled Breathing + Scriptural Meditation

Assignment:

- Practice 3-5 minutes of slow breathing twice a day.
- Pair each inhale/exhale with Scripture (e.g., inhale “The Lord is near”; exhale “I will not fear”).

This retrains the nervous system and integrates truth with physical calm.

“Fear Ladder” Exposure in Faith

Assignment:

- List avoided situations from least to most intimidating.
- Starting with the least intimidating, choose one manageable step you could take to face that fear.
- Before and after, pray using 1 Peter 5:6-7.
- Move slowly through each fear and do so with active support.

Burden Transfer Prayer (1 Peter 5:7)

Assignment:

- End the day by writing down the 1-3 fears weighing most heavily on your mind.
- Pray specifically: “Lord, I transfer this burden to You.”

This helps counselees practice surrender rather than rumination.

Gratitude & Grounding Exercise

Assignment:

End each day by listing:

- One provision of God you saw today
- One moment of unexpected peace
- One person to pray for

This helps shift attention from anxious forecasting to present grace.

Optional Supplement - You may need to involve a:

- **Medical doctor** for cardiac, respiratory, or physical symptoms of unknown cause
- **Psychiatrist** for severe or obsessive compulsive disorder
- **Pastor/Elder** for ongoing relational and spiritual support
- **Trusted friend or spouse** for accountability, presence, and practical help

You can find expanded resources on this topic in ABC’s membership page at christiancounseling.com.