

September, 2021



#LIBERTYSTRONG

Newsletter from your Clinical Team

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How are we doing and what would you like to see in the Clinical Newsletter?

We want to connect with you! Please let Angie Huber know what you would like to see in the newsletter. We will do our best to meet your request. Send any requests to aahuber@fcps.edu.

ANXIETY DISORDERS

By: Dr. Joanna Wheeler, Liberty School Psychologist

Anxiety is a feeling of fear, worry, or nervousness. Anxiety can be normal and adaptive, especially during certain developmental phases, such as the “stranger anxiety” that typically occurs for babies between the ages of 6 and 12 months. Feeling somewhat anxious about a test or performance may encourage us to practice or study more, increasing positive outcomes. Alternatively, when anxiety is excessive or occurs in inappropriate contexts, anxiety can disrupt performance, making even simple actions in daily life difficult. If anxiety reaches this level of severity, it no longer represents typical or “normal” anxiety, but crosses over into clinically significant anxiety. Symptoms become clinically significant when they begin to cause significant distress or impairment in areas of daily functioning and persist for a substantial amount of time.

The broad category of clinically significant anxiety is subdivided into various narrower anxiety disorder diagnoses, each of which is defined by specific features. Overall, anxiety disorders do share the features of excessive fear (e.g. flight or fight arousal and escape behaviors) and anxiety (e.g. muscle tension, hypervigilance, cautious, and avoidant behaviors). Specific Anxiety Disorders include but are not limited to Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Selective Mutism, and Social Anxiety Disorder. Panic attacks often occur with anxiety disorders as a particular type of fear response. However, panic attacks are not limited to anxiety disorders, and can be seen in other disorders. GAD may be characterized by a global sense of worry and unease across multiple life domains. Individuals with GAD may be irritable, restless, have poor concentration, and need reassurance from parents and teachers. Social Anxiety Disorder involves significant anxiety or fear in social situations (including performance situations) in which there are concerns of potential negative judgement by others. Individuals with Social Anxiety Disorder may fear that they will do or say something in public that will be humiliating or embarrassing. Individuals with Social Anxiety Disorder may demonstrate restricted interactions with peers, difficulty joining groups or speaking on the phone, difficulty with eating and drinking in front of others, avoidance of social gatherings and limited participation in class. Selective Mutism is defined by the failure to speak in specific social situations in which there is an expectation for speaking. The individual may speak in one location but not in another. For example, a student may be silent at school but talks normally at home. When examining the symptomology of anxiety disorders, it is often necessary to rule out other diagnoses such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and other mood disorders as these diagnoses can share some of the symptomology with anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorder may also co-occur with other disorders.

Here are **some** symptoms and behaviors that parents and teachers may notice for students.

Students may: be worried, frequently ask how to do tasks, often ask if they are doing assignments correctly, apprehensive to start work and complete work independently, frequently question their ability to do tasks, seem unsure of themselves and have low self-confidence, have a self-defeating attitude, give up easily, frequently express that they will fail, unable to relax, have a hard time concentrating, have headaches, irritability, nausea, hot flashes, having difficulty eating in the lunchroom, have difficulty advocating/communicating for themselves with peers and adults, and feeling tired for no reason, fail to or refuse to speak in front of others, cry easily, restlessness, disengage because they fear failure, have muscle tension and headaches, have stomachaches, have difficulty walking into rooms where everyone is already seated, avoid situations where they will be noticed (even if the attention is “positive”), have poor concentration, and have difficult working on group projects.

Cont. pg 4

**TAKING IT
ONE DAY
AT A TIME**



VIRGINIA SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH, 2021

Community Resources when in Crisis:

Merrifield Community Services Board

703-573-5679

Dominion Hospital

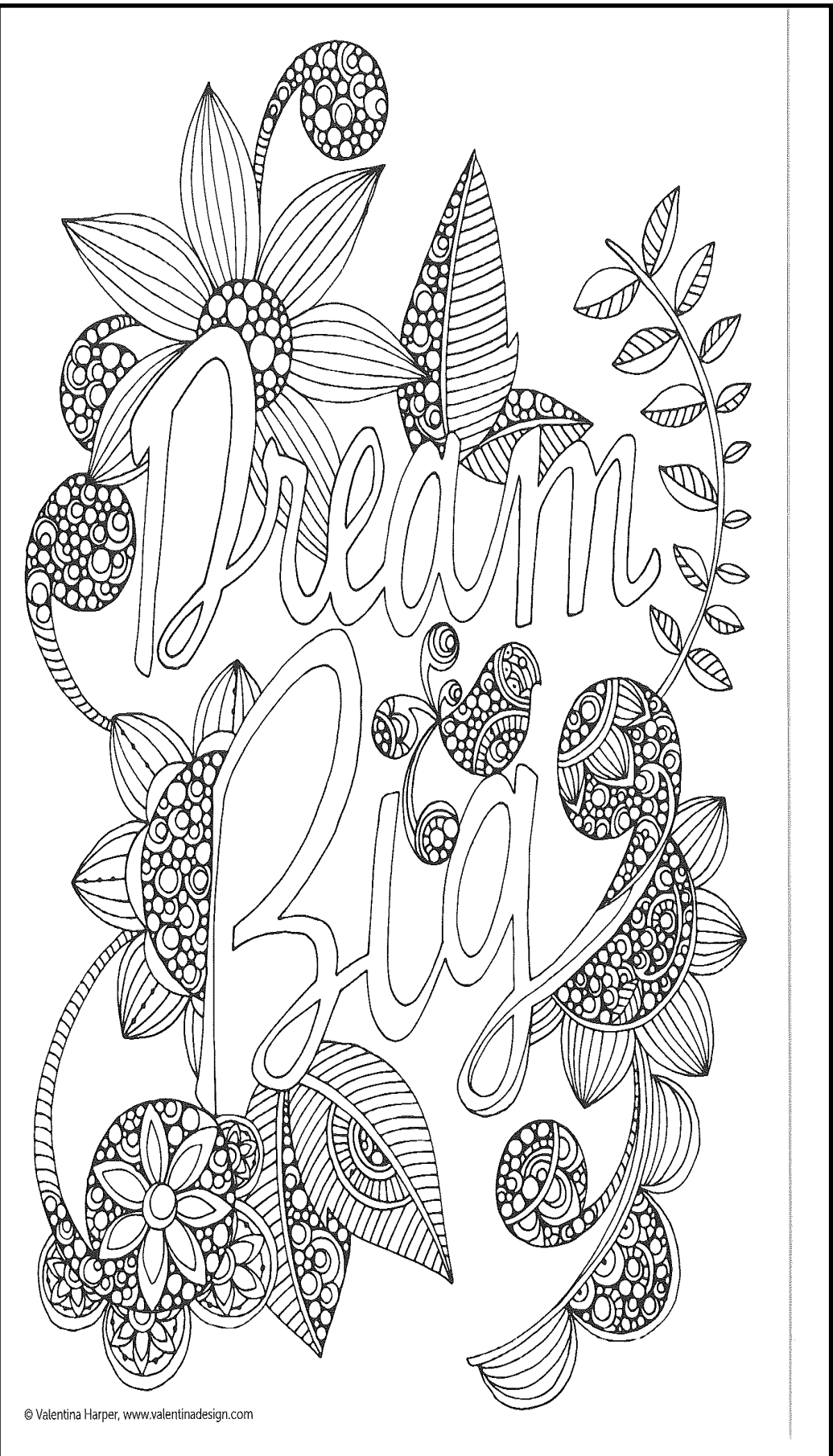
703-536-2000

911



Do not hesitate to let us know if you have concerns and we can help! Our information is at the end of this newsletter.

Enjoy this coloring page for stress relief!!!



Listening and Exposure Strategies to Confront Anxiety

By: Angie Huber, School Social Worker Liberty MS

Numerous strategies have been proven to be helpful when confronting anxiety concerns. In this section, I would like to focus on listening and exposure in helping someone with anxiety. Someone with anxiety tends to be greatly struggling with internal emotions and thoughts. Having a supportive person to listen to them can be very helpful. Exposure therapy tends to help by lessening the anxiety and changing the negative thoughts.

It is important to note that communication can be impaired when someone is struggling with anxiety. Numerous skills are involved in communicating effectively (listening, understanding what is being heard, formulating a response, sharing the response). This takes a lot of energy, which can be exhausting for someone with anxiety due to distracted thinking, overthinking and lightheadedness. Someone with anxiety may want to consider telling the other person if they are struggling to communicate, ask the other person to repeat themselves, try conversing with someone familiar and working on not overthinking.

When communicating with someone with anxiety, it is important to keep the above-mentioned struggles in mind and to work hard to effectively listen to the person who is struggling. Someone who is actively listening works to place the whole focus on the person talking, not on what they want to hear or what they think they are hearing. The person asks clarifying questions and keeps their responses short, being careful to never interrupt the person talking. Interruptions are a quick way to show the person that what the speaker is saying is not important, whether this is the intended message being sent or not. Putting efforts into actively listening, shows the speaker that the recipient is interested in what they are saying, are open to helping them to solve the problems and are able to put themselves to the side for a moment to show interest in the person talking. Building trust and rapport is always the first step in building effective communication.

Important active listening skills to keep in mind:

- DO NOT INTERRUPT- Listen until the person is done talking to understand
- CONVEY EMPATHY- Show concern by repeating or reflecting what you think you heard
- SHOW CONCERN WITH AFFIRMATIONS- sit with the other person's feelings, balance short responses (*I hear you, That makes sense, It sounds like a lot...*) with silence
- USE NONVERBAL CUES- such as eye contact, leaning forward, open posture and nodding, not touching the person without the person giving permission
- ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS (these typically are not yes/no questions)
- LET THE PERSON LEAD THE CONVERSATION – avoid changing the subject
- ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS- to improve the listener's understanding
- BE CAREFUL DISCLOSING OPINIONS- if the speaker gives permission (it is ok to ask for permission)
- DISCLOSE SIMILAR EXPERIENCES TO SHOW UNDERSTANDING- only if it could be helpful to the speaker and does not derail the speaker from the topic being addressed
- LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND THE SPEAKER'S BELIEFS, OPINIONS AND VALUES- as opposed to working to conform the speaker to believe differently
- BE PATIENT- with the speed or clarity of the conversation
- BEING AWARE OF PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES- barriers, noise, visual or nonverbal distractions, physical setting, fidget objects
- SET LIMITS ON CONVERSATIONS- It can be hard to focus and listen well for long periods of time
- LISTENER SHOULD TRY TO “SHUTDOWN” THEIR INTERNAL DIALOGUE TO LISTEN WELL

Cont. pg 5

TAKE THE SAFETY INTERNET PLEDGE



I will NOT post any content online for the express purpose of causing harm.

I will NOT share any personal information with public websites.

I will ALWAYS report suspicious or inappropriate behavior to the proper authorities.

I will ALWAYS encourage others to act responsibly & respectfully.



In the development of anxiety disorders, many factors in a person's biological makeup and early psychological and social environments may combine to increase risk for future anxiety. In sum, accumulation of many risk factors across biological and environmental domains leads to increased vulnerability to anxiety disorders. The role parents play in the improvement or maintenance of anxiety disorders has been a topic of research. For better or worse, individuals can learn to respond to a stimulus a certain way because they have observed the emotional and behavioral reactions of others. Studies show that parental responses can influence the intensity of a child's anxiety, the child's reaction or sensitivity to experiencing anxiety symptoms, and the strategies that the child uses to manage anxiety. In addition, the degree to which parents change their own behaviors to minimize a child's anxiety (e.g. overprotection or modification of family routines) has also been associated in some studies with an increase in the severity of anxiety symptoms.

Among the available interventions, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and exposure-based therapies have emerged as the most well-established treatment approaches for addressing anxiety disorders in children and adolescents. Research indicates that CBT plus medication is the most effective treatment of anxiety for youths ages 7-17, compared with either CBT or medication alone.

Resources

https://youtu.be/bF_1ZiFta-E (practice: Square breathing)

<https://youtu.be/J0vYnzpNTZE> (practice/info: Mindfulness and CBT)

<https://youtu.be/lzFObkVRSV0> (info: Panic attacks)

<https://youtu.be/7snnRaC4t5c> (info: Why do people get so anxious about math?)

https://youtu.be/l_NYrWqUR40 (practice: How to boost confidence)

Bibliography

Understanding Social Anxiety Disorder in Adolescents and Improving Treatment Outcomes: Applying the Cognitive Model of Clark and Wells

Current Diagnosis and Treatment of Anxiety Disorders

Assessment and Treatment of Anxiety Among Children and Adolescents

Social Phobia and Its Impact on Quality of Life Among Regular Undergraduate Students

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5th Edition

PBISWORLD.ORG

Anxiety Struggles

What You See	What I Feel
Always on Time	Instant tummy ache if I think I'm going to be one minute late.
Strong Work Ethic	Fear of being fired over the littlest thing/disappointing my boss.
Always in Control	Something will go wrong if I don't do everything myself.
Good at Planning	I need to be prepared in case bad thing a, b, or c, happens.
Always Organized	I have to be organized so I don't get overwhelmed and meltdown
Super Helpful	If I say "no" they'll think that I don't care about them.
Zen & Relaxed	If I don't meditate, do yoga, and breathe, I'll lose it.
Self-Assured	"Don't listen to anxiety. You got this. You got this. You got this."
Calm & Composed	*Just finished crying in the bathroom* "I can do this."

@BlessingManifesting

Your students can check out Ms. Huber's google classroom to see many cool things to do, learn about or to use to cope!

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/e/2PACX-1vSMKer3dWvdXMgM3d3sdf_nnsAKWIHjsrXeGtWCtcqkIQdmqao7b5gVQAUT16Nk1p9kED56KcuAqH0b/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=3000&slide=id.g8e48443adc_0_0



VIRTUAL ZEN DEN

[Sounds and Music](#)

[Meditation and Grounding Exercises](#)

[Visual Relaxation](#)

[Live Animal Cams](#)

[Yoga](#)

[Something Interesting](#)

[Pixar Short Film: La Luna](#)

[Pixar Short Film: Piper](#)

[Pixar Short Films: Day and Night](#)

[Pixar Short Films: Partly Cloudy](#)

[Art and Creativity](#)

[Games and Puzzles](#)

Listening and Exposure cont. from pg 3

Some requests from people struggling with anxiety as to what can be helpful.

“What helps me is calmness, acceptance- not trying to dispel it with ‘rational’ or ‘logical’ argument.”

“Be kind, be non-judgmental. Let us know it will pass, let us know you are there.”

“Reminding me to breathe, asking me what I need.”

This brings us using exposure to help someone with anxiety. Typically, exposure therapy is something that is accomplished with a professional therapist and should be approached cautiously. It is an attempt to “expose” individuals to something they fear to reduce the fear that they have developed toward the fear of activities or situations. For example, many students developed concerns and resistance to doing social activities that they were accustomed to doing during the pandemic due to lack of exposure, COVID concerns and being isolated from these activities for so long. Some parents chose to reengage their kids earlier than others to avoid any social concerns for long term. This approach was helpful for some children. This example also points out the need for exposure as opposed to extinction techniques because the fear may continue to exist for what “might happen” until the exposure occurs, and the person is able to confront the fear.

Exposure techniques are considered safe and effective when combined with support for helping anxiety. Working with a qualified therapist would be the best approach in finding the best technique. Most exposure work is combined with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to address thought patterns leading to anxiety and fears. Challenging these thoughts typically involves three steps: Identifying the negative thoughts, challenging the reality of the negative thoughts, and replacing negative thoughts with healthier thinking patterns resulting in less anxiety.

Exposure therapy started with phobias. Example: Some people have a fear of spiders. The person would work through steps to diminish the fear by 1) imagining a spider until there is no fear; 2) look at spiders until there is no fear; 3) be in the same room with a spider in a cage until there is no fear; 4) be in a room with spider with no cage until no fear; 5) touch the spider. This is just an example of how it works. I personally don’t know why someone would want to touch a spider unless needed but fears such as these exist in numerous ways. Another example like this would be a fear of being bitten by a dog.

However, if you decide to try to help someone without a therapist by doing some exposure techniques, we have some tips. Consider these factors prior to trying exposures. 1) understand why the anxiety occurs; 2) start slow in exposing the person to the trigger (such as with pictures, videos, being in the same room); 3) help the person be accountable in whatever step they are on (stay in the situation until the anxiety dissipates and they are calm); 4) Learn relaxation techniques (deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga); 5) Do not move to the next step until the anxiety is gone at that step; 6) Be patient. This process can take time; 7) Once the person feels accomplished in diminishing the fear, continue to reintroduce the trigger to avoid the anxiety returning. You will see an ***Exposure Therapy Hierarchy Worksheet*** to help monitor the progress in this newsletter.

If at any point, you become concerned that the anxiety is causing too much distress mentally or physically, then a doctor or counselor would be contacted. Strategies should not be used to help anxiety unless an effective plan is developed for anxiety that becomes too high.

More resources that you may find helpful!

The Parent Resource Center (PRC) is excited to offer access to their library resources.

Their library is open for pick-up, on Wednesdays, by appointment only, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

The FCPS Parent Resource Center (PRC) is offering **free parent webinars in October**. They are:

- Family Digital Wellness: When is the Internet a Problem?: A Webinar for Families, **Friday, October 1**, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Dyslexia Virtual Open House, **Friday, October 8**, 10 to 11 a.m.

[More information on each session and how to register is available online.](#)

Note: Previous webinars have been recorded and [can be viewed on the PRC YouTube channel.](#)



Self-Care Reminders

1. Be really kind to yourself.
2. Say "yes" to meeting a need.
3. Pay attention to how you talk to yourself.
4. Pause and take really deep belly breaths.
5. Cheer yourself on.
6. Be gentle with your feelings.
7. Do one thing that makes you really happy.
8. Love yourself the best you can.

@BlessingManifesting

Try these activities for your student!

⇒ Liberty Middle School Afterschool Program

<https://libertyms.fcps.edu/activities/after-school-program>

⇒ Fairfax County Park Authority Programs

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes>

****some new videos added****

Call 911

Exposure Hierarchy

Describe, in broad terms, what makes you anxious:

Describe specific situations related to your anxiety that make you feel varying levels of discomfort. On a scale of 0 to 10 (0 being not at all anxious, and 10 being extremely anxious), rate how much each situation affects you.

Anxiety-Producing Situation	0 - 10

TherapistAid.com © 2012

Common Anxious Thoughts	Common Helpful/Brave Thoughts
<input type="checkbox"/> I am not safe	<input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time, nothing really bad happens
<input type="checkbox"/> Something bad could happen	<input type="checkbox"/> Even if something bad happened, I could probably handle it
<input type="checkbox"/> I have to prevent bad things from happening	<input type="checkbox"/> I am pretty brave
<input type="checkbox"/> Other kids are going to make fun of me	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't let fear stop me from doing things that matter to me
<input type="checkbox"/> I am going to make a mistake and it will be terrible	<input type="checkbox"/> Everyone makes mistakes sometimes, it's part of being human
<input type="checkbox"/> I can't handle _____	<input type="checkbox"/> You don't have to be perfect (in fact, people prefer to be friends with NICE people, not "perfect" people)
<input type="checkbox"/> I worry a lot about _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I can usually solve problems when they come up
<input type="checkbox"/> When I have a test or a game or a challenge, I think I am going to fail	<input type="checkbox"/> It's OK to feel scared sometimes
<input type="checkbox"/> I think something is going wrong with my body or my health	<input type="checkbox"/> Other helpful thoughts you have:
<input type="checkbox"/> If I don't do things perfectly, it will be terrible	
<input type="checkbox"/> I have to watch out for danger all the time	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other frightening thoughts you have:	

Fear Ladder Worksheet

Pick a situation that you commonly avoid due to anxiety and uncomfortable feelings. Write it down below next to #5 at the top of your ladder. Think of other smaller steps you can take to expose yourself to the fear you listed at the top of your ladder. Rate each step with the intensity of anxiety it would cause you to complete. Remember, you want each step to cause some level of anxiety. Once you decide to work on your ladder, you can start at the bottom and move up, or you can randomly pick any step and practice over and over.



Situations	Anxiety (0-10)
5.	
4.	
3.	
2.	
1.	

TRAILStoWellness.org

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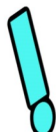
OpenView
Education
TRAINING THROUGH THEATRE



13+



WHAT IS TIKTOK?



A social media app, used mainly for creating music and dance videos.

The app can also be used for users to create /participate in viral challenges.

WHAT IS FAMILY SAFETY MODE?

A new feature, allowing Parents/Carers to connect their own TikTok account with their teen's TikTok account, this allows Parents/Carers to have remote control over certain safety features.

ARE THE FEATURES EXCLUSIVE TO FAMILY SAFETY MODE?

No, these safety features are already available in the app for TikTok users to set up themselves.

WHAT ARE THE SAFETY FEATURES?

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

SCREEN TIME MANAGEMENT

Parents/Carers can limit the amount of time their teen spends on the TikTok app.

DIRECT MESSAGES

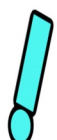
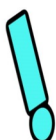
Parents/Carers can select which users can message their teen, or turn off direct messaging completely.

PRIVATE PROFILE

Set your teen's profile to private so only people they know can interact with their videos.

RESTRICTED MODE

Parents/Carers can limit the appearance of inappropriate content on the app.



KEEP TALKING

Having a regular conversation as well as setting up safety features is vital in keeping children and young people safe online.

Counseling is often a good approach to help people to work through struggles that they are having in their life. Many feel comfortable with the idea of counseling and many do not feel comfortable. One of the benefits of counseling is that it can help you to find solutions or to problem solve more quickly than without it. However, some still may not be comfortable and to add to the challenges of becoming comfortable with the idea of counseling, during COVID, it is difficult to find counselors who are not meeting virtually, as some do not feel comfortable with meeting virtually. A good alternative is to use journaling. Here are some journal prompts for September.

ARE
YOU
OK?



JOURNAL PROMPTS FOR SEPTEMBER

30 JOURNAL PROMPTS FOR ANXIETY

1. Anxiety isn't in control of me. I'm strong because...
2. What has helped me overcome anxiety in the past...
3. My happiest memory is...
4. I remember feeling...
5. What do I feel most anxious about right now...
How long have I been worried about this?
6. I want people to know this about me...
7. Write a letter to someone who contributes to your anxiety.
8. Name 5 things that make you feel better after a long day...
9. How do my worries affect my daily life?
10. How can I put 3 worries to rest
11. What are some obstacles that I've overcome...
12. List 5 things I want to remind myself every day...
13. What do my worries say about me?
14. I am grateful for...
15. What would happen if I stopped worrying about everything?
16. How does anxiety make me feel...
17. What makes me happy...
18. When was the last time I smiled and laughed?
19. List of songs that make you happy and upbeat...
20. What are my 5 worst habits?

SELF CARE OVERLOAD.COM

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