CBT counselling

FREE PRINTABLE PACK

CBT worksheets for anxiety

Nine printable worksheets to map your anxiety, question anxious thoughts, face fears step by step and track a four-week plan. Each one has a worked example.

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Before you start. These worksheets are general education, not a diagnosis or a substitute for professional care. If anxiety is stopping you from working, studying or looking after yourself, or if it is linked to trauma, work through them with a GP, psychologist or counsellor. If you are in danger, call 000.

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START HERE

How to use this pack

- **Start with the anxiety diary for one week.** It shows which situations, thoughts and actions keep your anxiety going, and it tells you which worksheet to use next.
- **Pick two or three worksheets, not all nine.** Worry fills your day? Start with the worry log. Panic attacks or avoiding places? The fear ladder. Harsh self-talk? The thought record.
- **Rate things from 0 to 100.** 0 is none at all and 100 is the most you can imagine. Ratings let you see change that is easy to miss.
- **Write it down; don't just think it through.** Thoughts on paper are easier to examine than thoughts in your head.
- **Expect anxiety while you practise.** The aim is not to feel no anxiety. It is to learn that you can do things even when you feel anxious, and that what you feared usually doesn't happen.
- **Print as many copies as you need,** or copy the tables into a notebook.

WORKSHEET 1

The anxiety cycle

Anxiety keeps itself going through a loop. Avoiding or escaping brings quick relief, but it also stops you from learning that the danger was smaller than it felt.

Trigger	→	**Anxious thought**	→	**Feelings and body**	→	**What you do**	→	**Short-term relief**
A situation, sensation or thought. *"I have to speak in the meeting."*		Overestimates danger, underestimates coping. *"My voice will shake and everyone will notice."*		Fear, racing heart, hot face, tight chest.		Avoid, escape or use a safety behaviour. *Stay silent; rehearse every word.*		Anxiety drops for now, so the avoidance feels like it "worked".

↺ Next time, the thought feels just as true, and anxiety comes back as strong or stronger.

Map one of your own recent anxious moments

Trigger

Where were you? What was happening?

Anxious thought

What went through your mind? What did you fear would happen?

Feelings and body

Name the feelings (0–100) and the sensations.

What I did

Did you avoid, escape, check, seek reassurance?

What happened next, short term and long term?

Did you feel relief? Did you get a chance to find out whether the feared outcome would really happen?

WORKSHEET 2

Thinking traps

Anxious minds fall into the same few traps. Naming the trap is the first step to stepping out of it. Tick the ones you notice most often.

Trap	What it sounds like	A question to ask yourself
☐ **Catastrophising**	Jumping to the worst outcome. "If I feel dizzy, I'll collapse and no one will help."	What is the most likely outcome? How would I cope if the worst did happen?
☐ **Fortune-telling**	Treating a prediction as a fact. "It's going to go badly."	How often have predictions like this actually come true?
☐ **Mind-reading**	Assuming you know what others think. "They all think I'm boring."	What is my evidence? What else could they be thinking?
☐ **All-or-nothing thinking**	Seeing things as perfect or a failure. "If I stumble on one word, the whole talk is ruined."	Is there a middle ground between perfect and disaster?
☐ **Overgeneralising**	One bad event becomes "always" or "never". "I always mess these things up."	Is that true every single time? Can I think of exceptions?
☐ **Mental filter**	Noticing only the negative detail. Remembering the one awkward pause, not the 20 minutes that went fine.	What am I leaving out? What went okay?
☐ **Discounting the positive**	"They were only being polite." "Anyone could have done that."	Would I dismiss this if a friend had done it?
☐ **"Should" statements**	Rigid rules for yourself. "I should never feel anxious."	Is this rule helping me? What would I say to a friend?
☐ **Emotional reasoning**	"I feel scared, so it must be dangerous."	Is this a feeling or a fact? What would someone calm notice?
☐ **Labelling**	Judging your whole self on one moment. "I'm pathetic."	Am I a whole person or one moment? What would be a fairer description?

> You'll use these names in the thought record: when you catch an anxious thought, ask "which trap is this?" before you look at the evidence.

WORKSHEET 3

Anxiety diary

Whenever your anxiety rises above about 40 out of 100, take two minutes to fill in a row. At the end of the week, look for patterns: which situations, thoughts and actions keep coming up? What have you been avoiding?

Day, time and place	Anxiety (0–100)	Thought in my mind	Body sensations	What I did
Tuesday, 8 am, on the train	*70*	*"If I feel sick here, no one will help me."*	*Racing heart, hot*	*Got off one stop early*

End-of-week review: patterns I noticed

WORKSHEET 4

Thought record

Treat an anxious thought as a guess to check, not a fact. The aim is not "positive thinking"; it is a thought that fits all of the evidence.

Situation	Feeling and intensity (0–100)	Anxious thought and belief (0–100%)	Thinking trap	Evidence for	Evidence against	Balanced thought and belief (%)	Feeling now (0–100)
Before the team meeting	*Anxiety 80*	*"My voice will shake and everyone will see I don't know what I'm doing" (85%)*	*Mind-reading, catastrophising*	*My voice shook a little last time*	*Nobody said anything; my manager said it went well; I know this topic*	*"My voice might shake a little, but people listen to the content, and I'm prepared" (70%)*	*Anxiety 50*

Useful questions: Out of the last hundred times I had this thought, how often did it come true? What would I tell a friend who had this thought? What is the evidence, not the feeling?

WORKSHEET 5

Worst, best, most likely

When your mind fixes on the worst case, it freezes the film at the scariest frame. This sheet plays the film to the end. It works best once you've calmed down a little, not at the peak of anxiety.

What I'm worried about

Example: "My test results are late."

The worst that could happen

Write it out in full. Example: "It's a serious illness."

The best that could happen

Example: "The lab is just busy."

The most likely outcome, based on my past experience

Example: "An admin delay, like last time."

If the worst did happen, how would I cope? Who or what would help?

Example: "I'd make a plan with my GP, and my family would be there for me."

How much will this matter in a week? A month? A year?

Anxiety before (0–100) → after (0–100)

WORKSHEET 6

Worry log and problem solving

Set a fixed 20 to 30 minutes each day for worrying, at the same time and place, and not close to bedtime. During the day, jot each worry down in one line and save it for worry time. In worry time, sort each worry: practical (you can act on it) or hypothetical (a "what if" you can't solve today).

Worry	Practical or hypothetical?	Next step
My loan repayment is overdue	*Practical*	*Call the bank at 10 am today*
What if I lose my job next year?	*Hypothetical*	*Notice it, then let it go without searching for an answer*

Problem solving, for practical worries

1. The problem, stated precisely

2. Five possible solutions (don't judge them yet)

3. Pros and cons of the best two or three

4. The solution I'll try

5. Its first small step, and when

WORKSHEET 7

Fear ladder

List situations you avoid or fear and rate each one from 0 to 100. Order them from lowest to highest and start with a step around 30 to 40. Before each practice, write your prediction. Stay long enough for the prediction to be properly tested, without safety behaviours. Repeat each step several times, in different places and at different times, before moving up.

Step	Situation	Expected anxiety (0–100)	My prediction	What actually happened?
1	*Small local shop with a friend, 5 minutes*	*30*	*"If I get dizzy, I won't be able to get out"*	*I felt a bit dizzy, but I finished the shopping*
5	*Standing in a long checkout queue*	*85*		

> If your anxiety is linked to trauma, or if you have a heart or breathing condition and your fear is of body sensations, do exposure work with a health professional, not on your own.

WORKSHEET 8

Safety behaviours and behavioural experiments

Safety behaviours are the things you do to "prevent disaster". When disaster doesn't strike, your mind credits the safety behaviour instead of learning there was no real danger. Tick the ones you use, then drop them one at a time, starting low on your fear ladder.

- ☐ Sitting near the exit
- ☐ Always carrying water or tablets "just in case"
- ☐ Rehearsing what to say before speaking
- ☐ Avoiding eye contact
- ☐ Checking my pulse or body
- ☐ Googling symptoms
- ☐ Asking others "are you sure it's fine?"
- ☐ Only going out with someone
- ☐ Gripping things so my hands don't shake
- ☐ Other: _____

Behavioural experiment record

Test one specific belief in the real world, like a scientist.

Belief to test (0–100%)	The experiment	My prediction	What happened	What I learned; belief now (%)
"If I ask a question in class, everyone will think I'm stupid" (70%)	*Ask one short question in the next lecture and watch people's reactions*	*People will roll their eyes or laugh*	*The lecturer welcomed it; two classmates said they'd wondered the same*	*People mostly don't judge questions (25%)*

WORKSHEET 9

Four-week plan tracker

For mild to moderate anxiety, 20 to 30 minutes a day. Tick each day you practise. Don't expect anxiety to disappear in four weeks: a good sign of progress is doing things you used to avoid, even if you still feel a little anxious.

Practice	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1							
Anxiety diary							
Muscle relaxation, 15 minutes							
Listed my safety behaviours							
Week 2							
Thought record (3 times this week)							
Worry time (if worry is my main problem)							
Relaxation and slow breathing							
Week 3							
Built my fear ladder							
Exposure practice on a low step							
Dropped one safety behaviour							
Week 4							
Exposure practice, moving up the ladder							
One behavioural experiment							
Compared this week's diary with week 1							

Average anxiety in week 1 (0–100)

Average anxiety in week 4 (0–100)

Something I did this month that I used to avoid

NEXT STEPS

Where to get help in Australia

Self-help works well for many people. It is better to work with a professional if anxiety is getting in the way of work, study or relationships; if you've tried these exercises for a few weeks without change; if you're using alcohol or other drugs to cope; or if you have thoughts of harming yourself.

- **In an emergency or if you are in danger:** call **000**.
- **Lifeline** (24/7 crisis support): **13 11 14**
- **Beyond Blue** (support for anxiety and depression): **1300 22 4636**
- **Your GP** can assess you, rule out physical causes and refer you for therapy. You may be eligible for Medicare-subsidised sessions with a psychologist.
- **MindSpot** offers free online CBT courses for Australian adults: mindspot.org.au

Read the full guide

Step-by-step instructions, examples, common mistakes and the research behind each technique: CBT techniques for anxiety: 10 step-by-step exercises.

Background reading

- Beck, A. T., Rush, A. J., Shaw, B. F., & Emery, G. (1979). *Cognitive Therapy of Depression*. Guilford Press.
- Greenberger, D., & Padesky, C. A. (2015). *Mind Over Mood* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Craske, M. G., Treanor, M., Conway, C. C., Zbozinek, T., & Vervliet, B. (2014). Maximizing exposure therapy: an inhibitory learning approach. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 58, 10–23.
- NICE. Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder in adults (CG113); Social anxiety disorder (CG159).

Want help working through these?

CBT-informed counselling, online, in English or Farsi, from Melbourne for anywhere in Australia. Bookings open in 2027; join the waitlist to hear first.

mrspsychologist.com/en/counselling-services

I'm a counsellor, not a registered psychologist. This pack is general education and isn't a substitute for medical care or emergency help.