



Anxious Thoughts

Our brains are working 24 hours a day, never shutting down, always pumping out thoughts that pass through our minds... like clouds in the sky. That is truly incredible!

Many of these thoughts are helpful to us, keeping us focused on the task at hand, guiding us to solutions. However, some thoughts that our brains pump out are “distracting thoughts,” serving to take our attention away from the task at hand... pulling us away from the “present moment.”

Sometimes these distracting thoughts are about the **past**: where we messed up, regrets we have, problems we have not solved, emotional wounds we have not yet healed. Sometimes these thoughts are about the **future**: feelings of uncertainty about what may come, anxiety about how we will function with new challenges, fears of failure, insecurities.

A central strategy for managing anxiety more effectively is to practice *bringing your attention back to the present moment*, so that you can use the full power of your mind to address the task at hand and solve problems as fully and quickly as possible.

Follow these three steps below... and practice.

1. Notice the thought

- Do not try to block the thought... that doesn't work!
- Simply notice the thought.
- The thought is from your brain... it is a part of you. Anxiety is not your enemy.



2. Evaluate: Is it emotional or rational?

- What is the evidence that you should believe this thought?
- What are the chances this thought is valid and truthful?
- Is this from your rational mind **or** your anxious mind?

3. Plan

- Determine what steps are necessary to restore your emotional balance. Ask yourself what you need to do to feel and act healthier in this moment.
 - Do you need to let the thought pass... like a cloud in the sky?
 - Or do you need to grab onto the thought and focus on it, in this moment?
- Focus on the breath.
- Release any muscle tension.
- Coach yourself with positive self-talk.
- Use distraction.
- Implement other helpful strategies, passive and/or active.
- Meditate daily.
- Practice, practice, practice.

