

# VALUES VS. ANXIETY CLARIFICATION WORKSHEET

Downloadable worksheet • Use in-session or between sessions

Want structured treatment instead of coping forever? Request a consultation at [muradcounseling.com](https://muradcounseling.com).

Separating Meaning-Driven Action from Fear-Driven Avoidance

## First: Let's Get Something Straight

Anxiety is not the enemy.

Anxiety is a threat detection system.

The problem is not anxiety; it's when anxiety becomes the decision-maker.

Many people say, "I just follow my gut."

If you have OCD or chronic anxiety, your gut is biased toward false alarms.

## This worksheet is designed to help you identify:

- When you are making choices to reduce short-term discomfort
- When you are making choices that move you toward long-term identity and meaning

The difference is subtle.

But it changes everything.

## Step 1: Identify a Recent Decision

Think of a situation in the past 7 days where you felt tension, hesitation, or avoidance.

### Situation:

What choice did you make?

What were you feeling at the time? (Be specific.)

What was the feared outcome?

What did your mind say would happen if you acted?

## Now the Important Question

### Was your choice primarily aimed at:

- Reducing anxiety
- Preventing uncertainty
- Avoiding judgment
- Avoiding regret
- Maintaining control
- Moving toward something meaningful

Be honest. Most anxiety-driven decisions feel justified in the moment.

Pro Tip from Felix

Anxiety-driven choices often sound responsible.

“I just want to be careful.”

“I don’t want to make a mistake.”

“I need to think this through more.”

If the primary outcome is relief, not growth, it’s anxiety steering.

Relief is immediate. Growth is delayed.

## Step 2: Define the Value (Without Being Abstract)

Values are not goals.

“Be confident” is not a value.

“Never feel anxious” is definitely not a value.

Values are identity directions.

### Examples:

- Being a present partner
- Acting with integrity
- Taking intellectual risks
- Living courageously
- Practicing honesty
- Being a reliable friend

**Ask:**

If anxiety were not in the room, what would I choose here?

What kind of person do I want to be in this situation?

What matters long-term, even if it costs discomfort short-term?

**Important Distinction**

Values often increase anxiety.

Anxiety reduction decreases anxiety.

If your choice reduced anxiety immediately, it was likely avoidance.

If your choice increased anxiety but aligned with who you want to be, that's values-based action.

**Step 3: Cost Analysis**

Now we calculate the impact.

If I follow anxiety consistently in this area, what happens in 6 months?

In 3 years?

What relationships, opportunities, or self-respect does it cost?

Now reverse it.

If I consistently choose values — even when anxious — what changes over time?

Be realistic. Not motivational. Practical.

**Pro Tip from Felix**

Values-based action does not guarantee confidence.

It builds self-trust.

Most people chase confidence. That's backwards.

Confidence follows repeated courageous behavior, not the other way around.

## Step 4: Behavioral Translation

We now convert this into a concrete action.

### One anxiety-triggering situation I face repeatedly:

My anxiety usually tells me to:

My value tells me to:

### Smallest realistic values-based action I can take this week:

How anxious do I predict I will feel (0-100)?

Am I willing to feel that level in service of my values?

Yes / No

If no, what level would I tolerate?

Final Calibration

### Circle the pattern that fits you most:

- I overthink and delay
- I seek reassurance before acting
- I avoid conversations
- I avoid risk
- I avoid discomfort
- I over-prepare to eliminate uncertainty

That is your exposure target.

Values-based living is exposure-based living.

Clinical Foundations

Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D., & Wilson, K. G. (2012). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.

Craske, M. G., et al. (2014). Inhibitory learning model of exposure.

Abramowitz, J. S. (2006). Understanding and treating OCD.

This worksheet integrates ACT principles with ERP behavioral activation under uncertainty.

Closing Statement

These tools are educational and not a substitute for individualized treatment. If you would like structured guidance applying these principles to OCD, anxiety, or trauma-related avoidance, request a consultation.