

# ACT for Anxiety Guide

A structured guide for changing your relationship with anxiety.

## How to use this resource

The goal is not to force anxiety away before life can begin. The goal is to practice willingness, present-moment awareness, and values-based action while anxiety is present.

## The ACT Perspective on Anxiety

Anxiety is an overprotective alarm system. It is uncomfortable, but it is not always dangerous. ACT focuses on changing your relationship with anxiety rather than making calmness the entry fee for living.

- Trying to control anxiety can make life smaller.
- You can feel anxiety and still choose useful behavior.
- Willingness means making room for discomfort in service of what matters.
- The goal is flexibility, not perfect calm.

## The Struggle Switch

When anxiety shows up, the mind often adds a second layer of struggle: 'I should not feel this,' 'Something is wrong,' or 'I have to make this stop.' That struggle can become more limiting than the anxiety itself.

What do I usually do to control anxiety?

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What relief does that strategy give me?

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What does it cost over time?

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What would I do if I were willing to feel anxiety and still act?

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## Acceptance Practice

- Notice: Anxiety is here.
- Locate: Where do I feel this in my body?

- Breathe: Make room around the sensation.
- Name the message: My anxiety is trying to protect me from something.
- Choose: Even with anxiety present, I can take the next values-based step.

## Defusion from Worry Stories

Worry thoughts often repeat familiar themes. Naming the story creates distance from it.

My most common anxiety story is: _____
When this story appears, I usually: _____
A more flexible response I can practice is: _____
One action I can take without waiting for certainty is: _____

## Grounding in the Present

- Name five things you can see.
- Name four things you can touch.
- Name three things you can hear.
- Name two things you can smell.
- Name one thing you can taste or one thing you are grateful for.

### Clinical note

Grounding is not a test of whether anxiety disappears. It is a way to return attention to the present so anxiety does not fully dictate behavior.