

ANXIETY AND AVOIDANCE

The 7-Day Avoidance Ledger

Track one meaningful example each day - without turning awareness into surveillance.

PURPOSE

Avoidance can reduce distress quickly and still narrow life over time. This ledger helps you notice that tradeoff with curiosity, not self-criticism.

HOW TO USE IT

Complete one entry per day for seven days. Use your first reasonable answer. Optional distress ratings add context; they are not a scorecard and do not need to decrease.

USE WITHOUT OVER-MONITORING

Do not search for every possible example, repeatedly review earlier entries, or use the ledger to prove you are handling anxiety correctly. One entry per day and one review after the week are enough.

What counts as avoidance - and what does not

Avoidance is broader than not going. It can include postponing, leaving early, staying silent, not opening a message, overpreparing, seeking reassurance before acting, distracting whenever discomfort appears, or choosing only options that feel safe.

THE FUNCTION MATTERS

A behavior becomes clinically important when its main function is to escape discomfort or uncertainty and it repeatedly limits functioning, flexibility, or contact with what matters.

DO NOT PATHOLOGIZE GOOD JUDGMENT

Healthy boundaries, rest, medical or physical safety decisions, practical problem-solving, pacing, and leaving genuinely unsafe situations are not failures of exposure. Context and function matter.

THE AVOIDANCE LOOP

TRIGGER → DISTRESS → AVOIDANCE → RELIEF → LONGER-TERM COST

The goal is not to eliminate all avoidance. It is to notice when short-term relief begins to organize your choices.

Day 1: one meaningful example

Write enough to recognize the pattern. You do not need a complete account or a perfectly accurate rating.

SITUATION OR TRIGGER

WHAT I NOTICED INTERNALLY (THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, SENSATIONS, UNCERTAINTY)

WHAT I DID: AVOIDANCE, SAFETY BEHAVIOR, OR APPROACH BEHAVIOR

IMMEDIATE EFFECT OR SHORT-TERM RELIEF

LATER COST, TRADEOFF, OR EFFECT ON FUNCTIONING

WHAT MATTERED IN THIS SITUATION

TODAY'S REFLECTION

What did the avoidance make easier in the moment?

Day 2: one meaningful example

Write enough to recognize the pattern. You do not need a complete account or a perfectly accurate rating.

SITUATION OR TRIGGER

WHAT I NOTICED INTERNALLY (THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, SENSATIONS, UNCERTAINTY)

WHAT I DID: AVOIDANCE, SAFETY BEHAVIOR, OR APPROACH BEHAVIOR

IMMEDIATE EFFECT OR SHORT-TERM RELIEF

LATER COST, TRADEOFF, OR EFFECT ON FUNCTIONING

WHAT MATTERED IN THIS SITUATION

TODAY'S REFLECTION

What mattered on the other side of the discomfort?

Day 3: one meaningful example

Write enough to recognize the pattern. You do not need a complete account or a perfectly accurate rating.

SITUATION OR TRIGGER

WHAT I NOTICED INTERNALLY (THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, SENSATIONS, UNCERTAINTY)

WHAT I DID: AVOIDANCE, SAFETY BEHAVIOR, OR APPROACH BEHAVIOR

IMMEDIATE EFFECT OR SHORT-TERM RELIEF

LATER COST, TRADEOFF, OR EFFECT ON FUNCTIONING

WHAT MATTERED IN THIS SITUATION

TODAY'S REFLECTION

What did the behavior protect you from feeling or not knowing?

Day 4: one meaningful example

Write enough to recognize the pattern. You do not need a complete account or a perfectly accurate rating.

SITUATION OR TRIGGER

WHAT I NOTICED INTERNALLY (THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, SENSATIONS, UNCERTAINTY)

WHAT I DID: AVOIDANCE, SAFETY BEHAVIOR, OR APPROACH BEHAVIOR

IMMEDIATE EFFECT OR SHORT-TERM RELIEF

LATER COST, TRADEOFF, OR EFFECT ON FUNCTIONING

WHAT MATTERED IN THIS SITUATION

TODAY'S REFLECTION

Did this choice expand or narrow your options later?

Day 5: one meaningful example

Write enough to recognize the pattern. You do not need a complete account or a perfectly accurate rating.

SITUATION OR TRIGGER

WHAT I NOTICED INTERNALLY (THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, SENSATIONS, UNCERTAINTY)

WHAT I DID: AVOIDANCE, SAFETY BEHAVIOR, OR APPROACH BEHAVIOR

IMMEDIATE EFFECT OR SHORT-TERM RELIEF

LATER COST, TRADEOFF, OR EFFECT ON FUNCTIONING

WHAT MATTERED IN THIS SITUATION

TODAY'S REFLECTION

What would a small, workable approach behavior have looked like?

Day 6: one meaningful example

Write enough to recognize the pattern. You do not need a complete account or a perfectly accurate rating.

SITUATION OR TRIGGER

WHAT I NOTICED INTERNALLY (THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, SENSATIONS, UNCERTAINTY)

WHAT I DID: AVOIDANCE, SAFETY BEHAVIOR, OR APPROACH BEHAVIOR

IMMEDIATE EFFECT OR SHORT-TERM RELIEF

LATER COST, TRADEOFF, OR EFFECT ON FUNCTIONING

WHAT MATTERED IN THIS SITUATION

TODAY'S REFLECTION

Where did healthy pacing or a legitimate boundary matter today?

Day 7: one meaningful example

Write enough to recognize the pattern. You do not need a complete account or a perfectly accurate rating.

SITUATION OR TRIGGER

WHAT I NOTICED INTERNALLY (THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, SENSATIONS, UNCERTAINTY)

WHAT I DID: AVOIDANCE, SAFETY BEHAVIOR, OR APPROACH BEHAVIOR

IMMEDIATE EFFECT OR SHORT-TERM RELIEF

LATER COST, TRADEOFF, OR EFFECT ON FUNCTIONING

WHAT MATTERED IN THIS SITUATION

TODAY'S REFLECTION

What did this example teach you about the pattern - without grading yourself?

Review the week once

Look for recurring functions and tradeoffs, not a verdict about your effort or character. A partial week is still usable information.

WHERE DID AVOIDANCE SHOW UP MOST OFTEN, AND WHAT KIND OF RELIEF DID IT PROVIDE?

WHAT COST OR NARROWING EFFECT APPEARED REPEATEDLY?

WHICH VALUES, RELATIONSHIPS, RESPONSIBILITIES, OR PRIORITIES WERE MOST AFFECTED?

WHERE DID I USE A HEALTHY BOUNDARY, REST, SAFETY DECISION, OR PRACTICAL PROBLEM-SOLVING INSTEAD?

WHAT IS ONE SMALL APPROACH BEHAVIOR WORTH DISCUSSING OR TESTING NEXT?

Choose one small, deliberate next step

A useful next step moves toward something important without requiring you to overwhelm yourself or create an exposure plan beyond your current support.

ONE REPEATED PATTERN I NOTICED

WHAT MATTERS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF IT

ONE SMALL APPROACH BEHAVIOR OR TREATMENT QUESTION

WHEN PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT MAY HELP

Consider professional assessment when anxiety or avoidance persistently interferes with work, relationships, health care, responsibilities, or daily functioning; when you feel stuck in increasingly narrow routines; or when it is difficult to distinguish protective choices from anxiety-driven restriction.

EDUCATIONAL USE

This resource is for psychoeducation and self-reflection. It is not a diagnostic test, risk assessment, or substitute for individualized care. If a situation involves immediate danger or a medical concern, use appropriate emergency or medical services rather than this worksheet.