WORKSHEET 06 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Understanding my anxiety

The cycle of trigger, thoughts, body, behaviours (psychoeducation)

AIM

Build a simple model of the person's anxiety with them from a real episode, to show how thoughts, sensations and behaviours keep each other going.

WHO IT IS FOR

Start of treatment for any anxiety disorder. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

20-30 min in session

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Choose a recent, specific episode (where, when, with whom).
2. Fill in the five boxes together: trigger, thoughts, sensations, behaviours, short-term and long-term consequences.
3. Show the arrows: how behaviours (avoiding, checking, seeking safety) bring immediate relief but keep the anxiety going afterwards.
4. Normalise: anxiety is a useful protective reaction that is being triggered too often or too strongly here.
5. Ask them to fill in page 2 with two more episodes before the next session.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Stick to a specific episode, not "my anxiety in general". The model is for understanding, not judging: don't present protective behaviours as "mistakes".

REFERENCES

Clark, D. A. & Beck, A. T. (2010). Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders: Science and Practice. Guilford.

Barlow, D. H., Sauer-Zavala, S., Farchione, T. J. et al. (2018). Unified Protocol for Transdiagnostic Treatment of Emotional Disorders: Therapist Guide (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 06 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

How my anxiety works

Anxiety is an alarm that protects you. Sometimes it goes off too often or too loudly. To understand it better, look at one specific moment when it appeared.

1. The trigger: where were you, what was happening?
2. The thoughts: what went through your mind?
3. The body: what did you feel (heart, breathing, stomach, muscles)?
4. What you did, and what happened straight away and later.

Trigger	Thoughts	Sensations	What I did	Effect afterwards

What repeats from one episode to the next?

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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