WORKSHEET 19 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Making room for the sensation

Welcoming anxious sensations instead of fighting them (acceptance)

AIM

Help the person observe a sensation of anxiety with curiosity, breathe around it and give it space, to reduce the struggle that amplifies it.

WHO IT IS FOR

Physical anxiety (knot in the stomach, tight throat, chest tightness), avoidance of emotions. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

5-10 min in session; 3-5 min on your own

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Start from a sensation that is present or evoked by a situation of moderate anxiety.
2. Observe: where is it? What size, what shape, what temperature? Is it still or moving?
3. Breathe: direct the breath towards the sensation, as if to surround it.
4. Make room: let the sensation be there, without liking it or wanting it, letting go of the struggle around it.
5. Expand: notice that it only takes up part of the body and of the experience.

POINTS TO WATCH

> “Accepting” does not mean resigning oneself or liking the sensation. Check that the exercise is not being used as a technique to make it go away. Dose the intensity: start with a moderate sensation.

REFERENCES

Harris, R. (2019). ACT Made Simple: An Easy-to-Read Primer on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (2nd ed.). New Harbinger.

Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D. & Wilson, K. G. (2012). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: The Process and Practice of Mindful Change (2nd ed.). Guilford.

PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 19 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Making room for the sensation

The more you fight a sensation of anxiety, the more space it takes up. This exercise suggests the opposite: looking at it with curiosity and letting it be there while it passes.

1. Observe: where is the sensation? What size, what shape, hot or cold? Does it move?
2. Breathe: imagine your breath going towards it and surrounding it.
3. Make room: let it be there. You don't have to like it, just stop fighting it.
4. Expand: notice the rest of your body, the sounds, the room. The sensation is only part of what is there.

Situation	Where and what the sensation was like	Struggle before /10	Struggle after /10

What changes when I stop fighting the sensation?

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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