



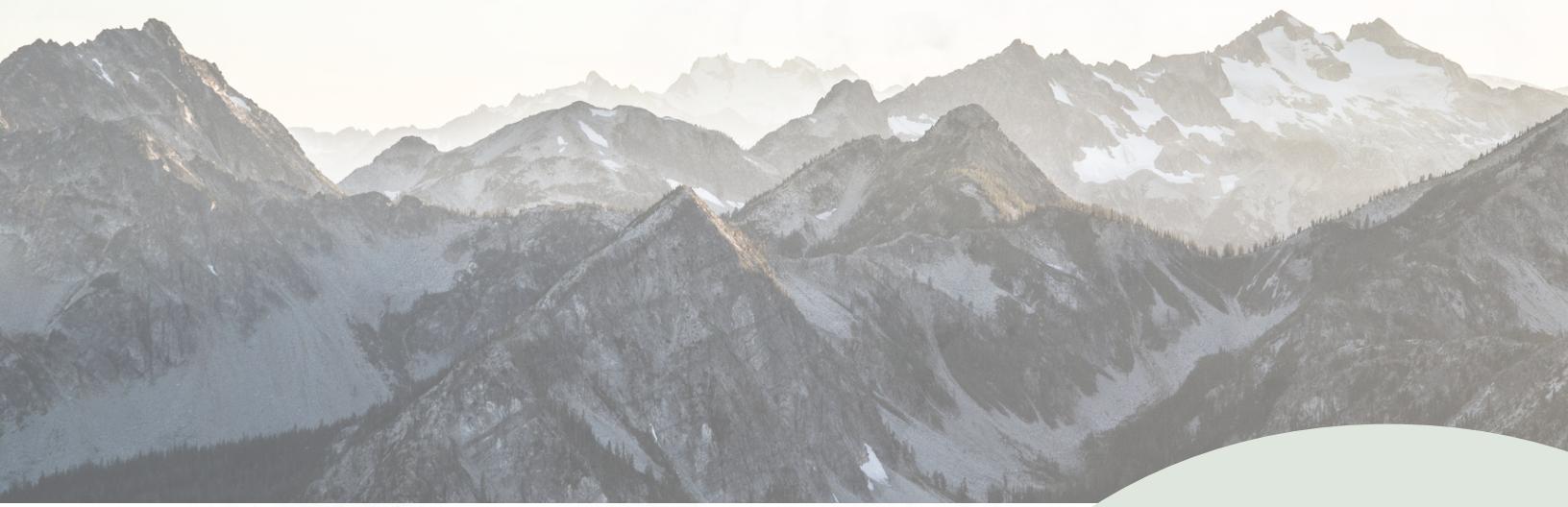
ANXIETY WORKBOOK

A comprehensive manual of resources that include cognitive and somatic exercises, journalling prompts, intention setting, goal planning, videos, and book recommendations.

BRUCE AVERY, MCP, RCC

Introduction

WHO IS THIS WORKBOOK FOR?



This workbook was designed to support people in addressing and managing their anxiety. It's best coupled with consistent and professional support. In this workbook, you'll find a variety of resources including cognitive and somatic exercises, journalling prompts, intention setting, goal planning, videos, and book recommendations.

Anxiety is a normal part of life and the goal isn't to get rid of it or eliminate it. One way to look at it is to develop a new relationship with it so that it's not overwhelming or controlling. We all have the innate capacity to heal and through awareness, consistency, and commitment, it's possible to see yourself, others, and life in a new and more healthy way.

In order to truly heal from anxiety, we need to turn inward and become compassionate and curious about our physical sensations and the messages are there waiting for us.

Introduction

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is your body's natural response to stress. It's a feeling of fear or apprehension about what's to come. Sometimes, anxiety can be adaptive and effective at keeping us safe. Other times, it can be detrimental to our life and prevent us from living a life we want.

A healthy baseline of anxiety is when we are preparing for a job interview or when we are about to try something new and unfamiliar. We might feel worried, nervous, or unsure but we can usually manage these feelings. These feelings help prepare us to "put our best foot forward" and to effectively accomplish the task at hand.

Conversely, an unhealthy baseline of anxiety is when our reaction is disproportionate to the situation. For example, we have a panic attack at the thought of giving a speech or we feel extreme fear at the thought of socializing to the point where we isolate from everyone.

Everyone reacts to stressful and overwhelming situations differently. There is no good or bad way to address and manage our anxiety. What's important is how we treat ourselves as we navigate these tough experiences and feelings.

Introduction

POLYVAGAL THEORY AND ANXIETY: BEFRIEND YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

Polyvagal theory explains how a trauma response can be induced causing all manner of overlapping problems. In knowing how this happens we can start connecting potential and active triggers with physical and mental responses. Through interpreting all of our behaviours we can begin to form healthier connections, reducing anxiety and creating positive reinforcements.

The vagus nerve is (usually) the longest cranial nerve in the body, connecting from our brain down to our colon. It plays a large part in our Automatic Nervous System (ANS), which contributes the control of our breathing, heart rate, digestion and reflex actions. Our Automatic Nervous System is constantly scanning our environment, observing if it is safe or if there is any perceived danger. This is where the Polyvagal Theory comes in.

According to the theory, we have three different states of nervous system activation or states of stress: ventral vagal social engagement, sympathetic activation, dorsal vagal shutdown.

We change between these states depending on whether we feel safe or endangered in our connections with our environments and people around us. They are normal functions, however, when traumas are left unresolved this process can become dysregulated. This not only affects us mentally, but also affects our physical selves as the vagus nerve connects so many of our internal organs.

Introduction

POLYVAGAL THEORY AND ANXIETY: BEFRIEND YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

How can we appease the vagus nerve?

When considering how to use the knowledge of the Polyvagal Theory to reduce anxiety and resolve trauma it is paramount to take a holistic approach that is tailored to the individual. We must take into account, environment, physical and mental health in order to identify triggers and work on rebuilding healthy connections.

Consider:

- Talk therapy
- Exercises for vagus nerve reset
- Breathing exercises
- Mediation
- Mindfulness
- Considering diet to improve the gut-brain connection
- Singing
- Music
- Humming
- Allowing yourself to take time to rest and relax by doing what you enjoy

Section 1

LET'S ASSESS

Emotional and physical health are both equally important. Both influence each other and in order to have balance, we need to give attention to our mind and body. Reflect on the past week and complete the assessment below.

How will you rate the following					
PHYSICAL	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always	
	I feel good about my body	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	I exercise to keep my body healthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	I get 7-8 hours of sleep every day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	I include nutritious food in my diet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	I spend time in nature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How will you rate the following					
EMOTIONAL	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always	
	I can manage my feelings properly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	I am able to cope when stressed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	I have a positive outlook and energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	I allot time for my hobbies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section 2

SETTING INTENTIONS

With any healing journey, having something to aim towards can provide structure and guidance. It can also motivate us towards reaching those goals. Allow your intentions to be flexible and achievable. Try to cultivate a balance between steering the trip and letting it steer you.



.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Section 3

CHECKLIST

Physical activities for the week

- Exercise and/or go for a walk
- Eat healthy food and snacks
- Get 7 hours of sleep per night
- Enjoy stillness and/or meditate
- Spend time in nature

Emotional activities for the week

- Journal
- Listen to favorite music
- Spend time with family/friends
- Practice meditation
- Do something fun



It may be helpful to bring flexibility, patience, and self-compassion as you use this checklist. Feel free to add, remove, and/or replace the tasks to align it with your lifestyle.

Section 4

SELF CARE PLAN

Let's create a holistic plan that honours your mind, body, and spirit. Self care can take many forms, but it always promotes you and your health. Practicing mindfulness and self-compassion, spending time outdoors, sleeping well, expressing gratitude are all examples.

GOALS

MENTAL

-
-
-
-

GOALS

PHYSICAL

-
-
-
-

GOALS

SPIRITUAL

-
-
-
-

Section 5

AAH APPROACH

This exercise is designed to support you in practicing compassion curiosity by bringing awareness to your inner experience. Whenever a thought, feeling, or sensation becomes overwhelming, use this three step approach and ask these questions below.

A C K N O W L E D G E

What's showing up right now (thought, feeling, sensation)?
What is causing or influencing this?
How is this affecting me?
Where is it showing up in my body?
Is there a physical reaction to it?
If it's uncomfortable, what would be the antidote?

A C C E P T

What's the purpose of what's showing up?
How can you give space to it?
Does it shift as you sit with it? How so?
When have you felt this way in the past?
How can you let it know that it's okay and normal?

H O N O U R

What is it trying to teach me?
What might be helpful about this thought, feeling, or sensation?
How will these feelings propel you towards positive action?
How have you been able to address tough feelings in the past?



Section 6

RE-AUTHORING

This exercise is drawn from narrative therapy which was developed by Michael White and David Epston. The purpose is to identify an unhealthy and unhelpful story that you hold about yourself and "re-author" it. By doing this, we can discover meaning, find healing, and establish or re-establish an identity.

1

What is an unhealthy and unhelpful story you hold about yourself?

2

Where did this story originate? How did it develop? What contributed to it?

3

What is a new, healthy, and helpful narrative?

Reflect on what would support and reinforce this new narrative.

Section 7

PHYSICAL AWARENESS

This exercise is designed to support you in practicing compassionate curiosity by bringing awareness to your inner experience. Whenever you notice a sensation, whether comfortable or uncomfortable, pause and observe how it's showing up for you. The purpose of this is to support you in developing a new relationship with your body.

- What sensations do you notice?
(trembling, tense, numb, etc.)
- Where are they showing up in your body?
(face, hands, chest, stomach, etc.)
- How are they showing up?
(heaviness, warmth, coldness, pain, etc.)
- Are they moving within your body? How so?
- Are there any emotions or feelings attached to it?
- Are there any beliefs connected to it?

What are your observations of that experience?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Section 8

DECATASTROPHIZING

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that have the power to influence how you feel. Everyone has some cognitive distortions—they’re a normal part of being human. However, when cognitive distortions are too plentiful or extreme, they can be harmful.

One common type of cognitive distortion is called catastrophizing. When catastrophizing, the importance of a problem is exaggerated, or the worst possible outcome is assumed to be true. By learning to question your own thoughts, you can correct many of these cognitive distortions.

What are you worried about?

How likely is it that your worry will come true?

If your worry does come true, what’s the worst that could happen?

If your worry does come true, what’s most likely to happen?

Section 9

RESOURCES

A helpful way to approach your healing journey is to understand that this isn't something that can be "completed" or "finished". Healing is an on going practice that requires consistency, patience, and commitment. Give yourself permission to take breaks, regress, progress, integrate, and reinforce. Everyone's journey is different. As long as you bring awareness and attention to your experiences then you're on the right path.

Exercises

- The 5-4-3-2-1 Method: A Grounding Exercise to Manage Anxiety
<https://youtu.be/30VMIEmA114>
- Reduce Stress through Progressive Muscle Relaxation
<https://youtu.be/ClqPtWzozXs>
- The Butterfly Hug - Bilateral Stimulation
<https://youtu.be/iGGJrqscvtU>

Books

- Unwinding Anxiety: New Science Shows How to Break the Cycles of Worry and Fear to Heal Your Mind by Judson Brewer
- Unfuck Your Brain: Using Science to Get Over Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Freak-outs, and Triggers by Faith G. Harper
- The Miracle of Mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hanh

Videos

- How to cope with anxiety by Olivia Remes
<https://youtu.be/WWlolAQpMcQ>
- What's normal anxiety -- and what's an anxiety disorder? by Dr. Jen Gunter
<https://youtu.be/xsEJ6GeAGbO>
- All it takes is 10 mindful minutes by Andy Puddicombe
<https://youtu.be/qzR62JJCMBQ>

notes

About THE AUTHOR

My name is Bruce Avery and I'm a Registered Clinical Counsellor and the Founder of Avery Therapy Centre. My team and I work with a wide range of people who may seek increased perspective, self-understanding, and clarity in their everyday lives. We also work with people who may feel that anxiety, depression, or past trauma is hindering them from achieving their goals.



Academically, I hold a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology and a Bachelor's degree in Organizational Leadership. I am currently working towards a PhD in Clinical Sexology and in the process of becoming a board-certified sex therapist. My practice is trauma and culture informed and I work with clients from all populations. My focus is on anxiety, depression, trauma, and the LGBTQ2S+ population. Using a somatic, humanistic, and strengths-based approach, I guide clients in accessing their determination, resiliency, and internal resources to navigate life's challenges.

I developed this workbook to support people through their challenges with anxiety. My goal was to synthesize different modalities, theoretical orientations, and frameworks into a resource that can be utilized by people who have no experience with therapy as well as people who've been in therapy for years. My hope is that you'll be able to add some tools to your toolkit and be able to better manage life's challenges. Feel free to return to this workbook as necessary. Repetition is key in forming healthy habits.

WANT TO LEARN
MORE?

SCHEDULE A CALL



admin@averytherapy.com
www.averytherapy.com