

Psychological risk factors for ANXIETY + DEPRESSION

MAKING CHANGES - HOW TO

In Part 3 of our Develop a Healthy Mindset series let's examine some psychological risk factors for anxiety and depression. To learn more about making changes for a healthy mindset see our accompanying article at www.theskillcollective.com/blog/healthy-mindset-part3-risk-factors-anxiety-depression.

Instead of...

Try...

NEGATIVE THINKING STYLES

Falling prey to negative thinking styles without recognising when they've kicked in.

Learn to spot negative thinking styles when they occur (see theskillcollective.com/blog/healthy-mindset-part2-thinking-styles) and challenge the assumptions that arise from them.

For example, emotional reasoning may lead you to believe that something bad will happen on your trip because you feel anxious beforehand. Ask yourself if you've felt anxious on previous flights - did you land safely? Ask yourself what the real probability of an accident is - is it as high as you think?

DESIRE FOR CONTROL

Getting caught up in the "what if" thoughts and worrying about the consequences of losing control.

Let's say you didn't have control over a situation. What is the worst case scenario for you? Is it tolerable, even if it feels distressing?

Gradually ease back on the hold that control has over you by delegating smaller, less essential tasks.

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

Avoiding people because you assume they think poorly of you only reinforces a belief that you 'escaped' scrutiny. That is, you don't entertain the possibility that people don't think poorly of you, nor see evidence to support this.

Treat your assumption as a working hypothesis - what is the evidence for your belief that you're not good enough, and what is the evidence against this belief?

Have there been any instances that disconfirm your belief? Has anyone ever given you good feedback on your work? Has anyone ever given you a compliment?

LOW DISTRESS TOLERANCE

Avoiding feeling anything but 'fine' may work in the short-term. In the longer term, however, it makes you more fearful of negative feelings.

Start by taking small steps to help make negative feelings a slight bit easier to tolerate.

For example, if driving causes you anxiety, start by driving around the block. If that causes too much anxiety, break it down further by practising on your street or in a carpark.

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MAKING CHANGES - A WORKED EXAMPLE

In Part 3 of our Develop a Healthy Mindset series let's examine some psychological risk factors for anxiety and depression; see www.theskillcollective.com/blog/healthy-mindset-part3-risk-factors-anxiety-depression. Below is a worked example of someone who feels anxious in social situations.

Instead of...

Try...

NEGATIVE THINKING STYLES

"Whenever I'm about to go to a party I automatically assume that everyone there will think the worst of me (mindreading) and that it will be the most embarrassing experience ever (catastrophising)."

"So perhaps I may be mindreading a bit...will absolutely everyone be thinking of me? If they do think of me, will they all think negatively of me?"

Yes I may dread going to these things, but it's not the case that it will be the most embarrassing experience ever - I've thought that of previous parties and the belief hasn't come true yet."

DESIRE FOR CONTROL

"I really hate not knowing exactly where we'll be going and who will be there, How can I know what to talk about in advance?"

"As much as I don't like it, sometimes I can't have control in every situation. Yes, I'd like to know every detail of Jenny's party (what we're doing, who will be there, what type of food we'll have), but in reality it's probably better to expect the unexpected and to feel anxious so that I don't feel 'thrown'. I can, however, work on improving my 'small-talk' skills."

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

"I don't know why I'm going to Jenny's party...her other friends will just think I'm a loser anyway and I've only been invited because Jenny feels sorry for me.."

"I'm assuming that people think I am a loser, but yes there is a possibility that my assumption isn't correct."

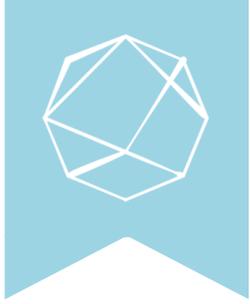
When I've hung out with Jenny's friends usually Taylor and Grace seek me out to talk to me, so it's unlikely that they'd do so if they really thought I'm a loser. "

LOW DISTRESS TOLERANCE

"I can't handle this awful feeling - I should have some alcohol before the party to calm my nerves down or I'll really make a fool of myself."

"A bit of alcohol to calm the nerves may seem like a good idea, but I know that when I've headed down this path before I end up worrying more about how whether I looked intoxicated or what I said intoxicated."

This time, I'll work on going to the party without drinking beforehand, and to make this first step easier I'll only stay for a short while."



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Instead of...

Try...

NEGATIVE
THINKING
STYLES

DESIRE FOR
CONTROL

LOW
SELF-ESTEEM

LOW
DISTRESS
TOLERANCE