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### **The Thirteen Best Techniques for Controlling Your Anxiety:**

These techniques will help you cope with anxious feelings. If you follow them reliably, you will see a reduction in your anxiety. Read them often, and practice them whenever you can.

1. **Accept, Expect, and Allow Anxious Feelings:** Try not to feel surprised, disappointed, or angry with yourself when anxious thoughts and feelings arise. These thoughts and feelings, while disturbing, are not dangerous. Allow them to exist, focus on functioning in spite of them, and they will soon dissipate. If you fight them or try to get rid of them, your anxiety level will take more time to come down.
2. **Identify Your Anxiety Level on a Scale of 0 to 10:** Zero means you are feeling no anxiety while ten means are feeling panic. Identifying and recording your anxiety level makes you an active participant in learning to manage your anxiety, and it establishes a baseline against which you can measure your progress.
3. **Monitor Your Anxiety Levels:** Observe your anxiety level as it rises and falls in relation to what you focus on. Watch your level rise as you try to rid yourself of anxious thoughts and feelings. Watch it fall when you accept and allow them to exist. Your anxiety level will fall even if you do nothing more than wait and let time pass. Once identifying your levels and watching them change becomes habit, you will be pleasantly surprised to find how relatively infrequently really high levels occur and how quickly they pass when they do arise.
4. **Anchor Yourself in the Present:** The present is your safe harbor. Stay there by concentrating on “what is” rather than “what if?” Describe your surroundings, talk to someone, count backwards from 100 by threes, read, sing, or listen to the radio. Do not get stuck in your future-oriented imagination. Whenever you start to feel drawn into the future, tell yourself to come back to the present. Stay in the here and now.
5. **Don’t Plan Your Escape:** Planning your escape tends to intensify anxious thoughts and feelings. It projects you out of the present and into the future where you are most subject to catastrophic thoughts and disturbing feelings. Rather than immediately following your impulse to avoid and flee, try instead to remain in contact with what frightens you while practicing your fear management skills. Over time, you will gain confidence in your ability to stay with anxious feelings without the need to escape.

6. **You Can Function Well with High Levels of Anxiety:** Try not to be so hard on yourself. Do not ask for perfection. You can function well with high levels of anxiety. You are not likely to scream, faint, or do the embarrassing, outrageous, or dangerous things you sometimes picture in your mind. Remember that anxiety is disturbing but not dangerous. Take comfort in the fact that while you may be feeling shaky, your inner anxiety is rarely apparent to others.
7. **Catch Your Disturbing Thoughts as They Occur** "What if this smooth flight starts to get turbulent?" is a thought. This kind of thought will produce fear because you are sensitized. Even though such thoughts may be fleeting and barely noticeable, they can startle and frighten you all the same, thereby initiating an anxiety cycle. Try to identify such thoughts as they occur, before your fears become intense. Once you recognize it as only a thought, you can begin to focus on comforting realities in the present, such as, "the plane seems to be flying quite smoothly right now," "I know that flying in turbulence is very safe, even though it triggers my anxiety," or—best of all—"I have the skills now to manage my anxiety levels whether the flight is smooth or bumpy."
8. **Separate Thoughts from Feelings:** Thought is internal speech—what we say to ourselves. Feelings are made up of sensations experienced in some part of the body. "I feel I can't breathe" is really a thought, which may follow the feelings of tension in your neck, throat, and chest. The thought, "I feel I can't breathe," makes the feelings of tension seem dangerous and starts a series of scary future thoughts. Instead, try saying, "Although I feel that I can't breathe, I know that this is just a thought that seems scary because of the tension in my body. I know that my breathing will take care of itself automatically so I can concentrate on using my skills to help bring my anxiety down."
9. **Find the Triggers to Your Fear Spiral:** Despite what you might sometimes feel, your terror does not come "out of the blue." In truth, it comes from a rapid interplay between thoughts and feared feelings. They may surprise you because you do not become aware of the spiral until your fear level becomes very high. Learn to identify the "triggers" to this spiral so that you can begin to manage your fear when your number is at a one or two and before it increases to a high level. It is much easier to turn off this fear spiral at low levels than at high levels.
10. **Stay inside Yourself:** Your tendency may be to think for others, to imagine how they perceive you. If you find that you are "looking" at yourself through the eyes of others around you, it is a sign that you are getting outside of yourself. Chances are that you are much more critical of yourself than anyone else would be. Pay attention to how others look at you, notice what colors they are wearing, and whether you like the style of clothing they have on. Focus on what you think of others, not what others may be thinking of you.
11. **Remember to Take Care of Yourself:** Define and limit your job. Do not try to manage the whole world. That will only exhaust you, as well as increase your feeling of being overwhelmed. When you are on the plane, your job is to be a passenger. Stop flying the plane. Let the pilot take care of that. Your job is to take care of yourself.

Make yourself as comfortable as possible, monitor your anxiety level, and focus on doing manageable tasks in the present.

12. **Distinguish between Anxiety and Danger:** Your task is to break your connection between feeling anxious and feeling that you are in real danger. Your body reacts in exactly the same way to both anxiety and legitimate danger. So, it is sometimes difficult to separate the two. When flying on an airplane, your anxiety especially makes you feel like you are unsafe. This is not true. Remind yourself that feeling anxious does not mean you are in danger. You are safe even when feeling intense anxiety.
13. **Learn and Become Comfortable with Diaphragmatic Breathing:** Many people feel it is the single most effective tool for managing anxious feelings. Breathing with your diaphragm allows you to take regular and rhythmic breathes, even when experiencing high anxiety. Rhythmic breathing reduces the effects of hyperventilation, stimulates the calming response in your body, and gives you a manageable task in the present on which to focus.