

# Brief psychotherapy tools for busy clinicians

High-yield micro-interventions and patient resources

# Disclosures

- No conflicts of interest

# Learning Objectives

After this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe basic grounding and DBT distress tolerance exercises
2. Describe CBT and ACT-based strategies to support adaptive coping
3. Describe core CBT-i principles for insomnia
4. List evidence-based resources to which patients can be directed, to support ongoing self-management

# Emotional Regulation

Mindfulness  
(Grounding)

DBT  
(Distress  
Tolerance)

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Mindfulness  
(Grounding)

DBT  
(Distress  
Tolerance)

# Cognitive Reframing

CBT

ACT

Emotional Regulation

Mindfulness  
(Grounding)

DBT  
(Distress  
Tolerance)

Cognitive Reframing

CBT

ACT

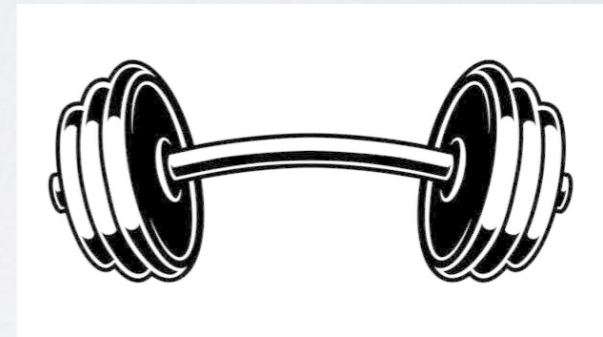
CBT-i

# Physician as Trainer

Reps and Sets

# Physician as Trainer

- Assess baseline and safety
- Introduce skills
- Explain the “why”
- Progressive overload
- Work happens at home



# Emotional Regulation Tools

# Emotional Regulation Tools

Regulate FIRST, think later

# Emotional Regulation Tools

1. Mindfulness - Grounding Exercises

# Mindfulness

What it is:

- Intentionally paying attention to the present moment with openness and curiosity and without judgment.

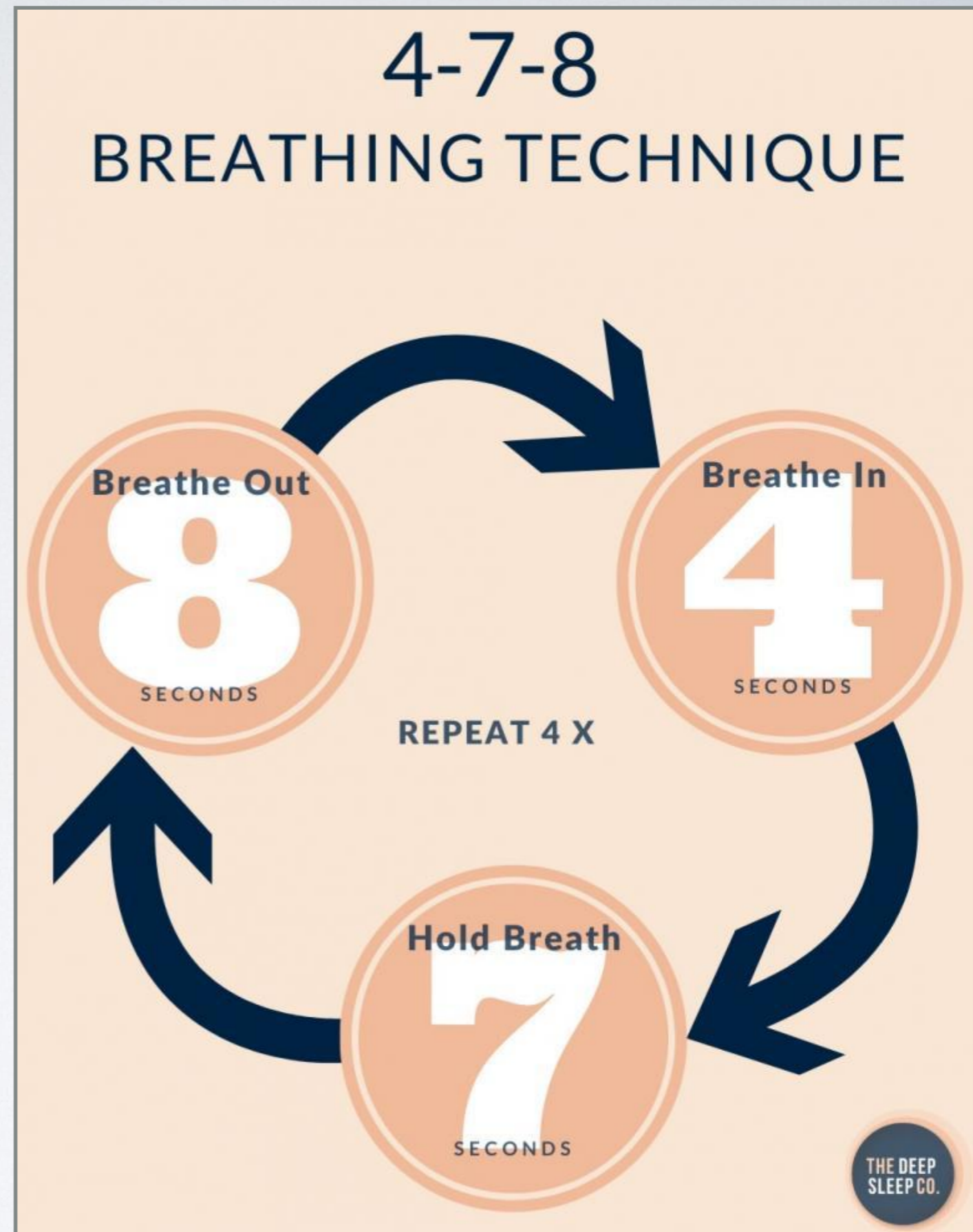
What the evidence shows:

- Small-to-moderate effect for anxiety, depression, stress, and emotional reactivity across clinical populations.

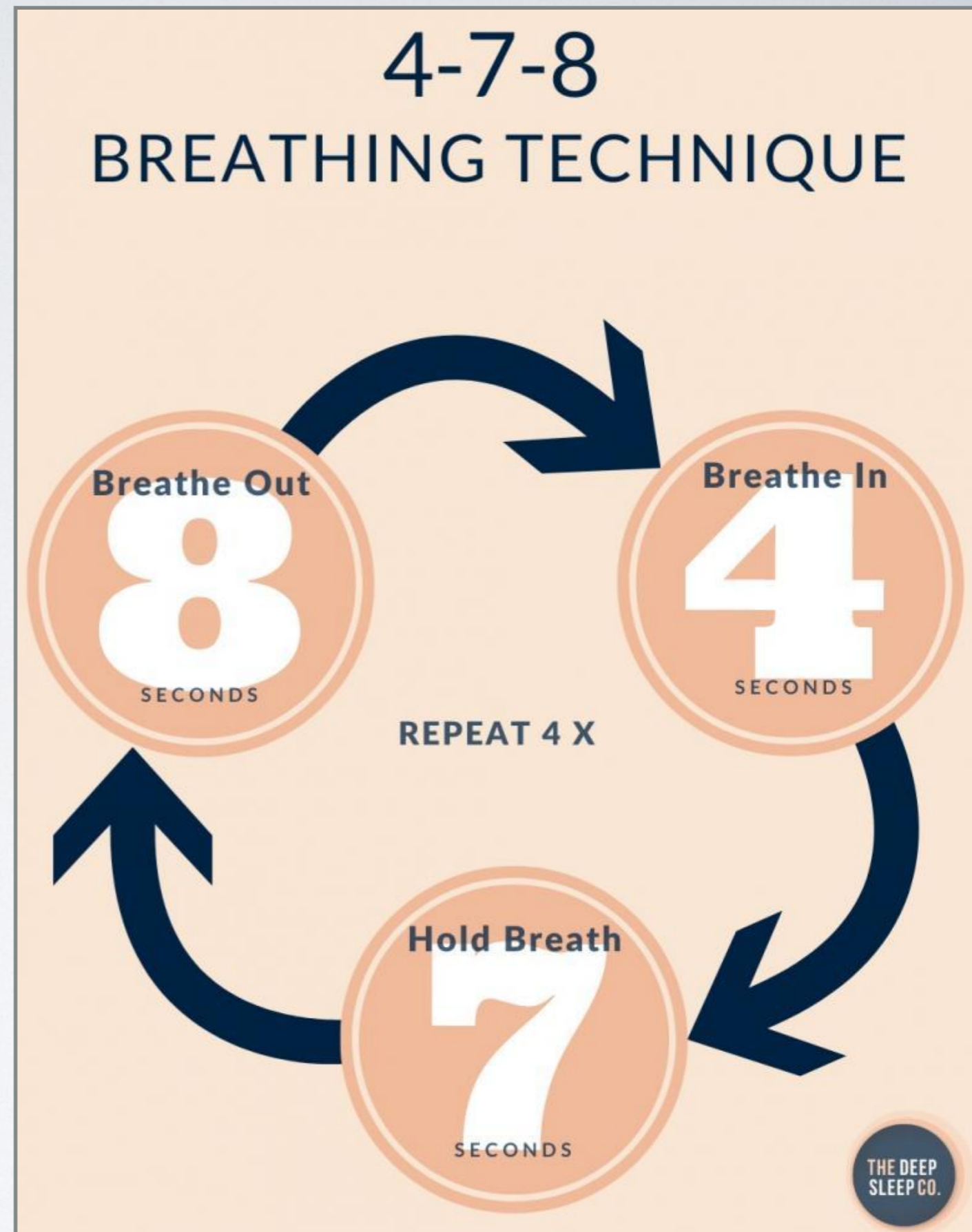
4-7-8

# Breathing

Breathe and know you're  
breathing



- **Training tip:**
  - Focus on the exhale
  - Not trying to breathe deeply, just more slowly
- **Rx:**
  - AM / PM / PRN
- **Troubleshooting:**
  - Dizziness → breathe lighter
  - Panic → skip the hold, lengthen the exhale



# 5 Senses

Sense and know you're sensing

## Notice five things that you can see.

Cast your eyes around and bring your attention to five things you might not normally notice. Choose something you wouldn't ordinarily pay attention to, like a shadow or a small crack in the concrete.



## Notice four things that you can feel.

Bring your awareness to four things you are currently feeling, like the texture of your pants, the feeling of the breeze on your skin, or the smooth surface of a table you are resting your hands on.

## Notice three things that you can hear.

Try to tune in to the sounds of your surroundings. What can you hear in the background? This might be a bird singing, the low hum of the refrigerator, or the faint sounds of traffic from a nearby road.



## Notice two things that you can smell.

Tune your senses into smells you might usually gloss over, whether they're pleasant or unpleasant. Perhaps the breeze is carrying the scent of pine trees if you're outside, or the smell of cafe from the sidewalk.

## Notice one thing that you can taste.

Focus on one thing you can taste right now, in this moment. You can take a sip of coffee, savor some chocolate, eat something, notice the current taste in your mouth, or even open it to search the air for a taste.



- **Training tip:**

- Taste is optional
- This is about noticing, not fixing

- **Rx:**

- Anxiety, dissociation
- Transitions
- Savouring

- **Troubleshooting:**

- Get specific with details

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# Emotional Regulation Tools

## 2. DBT Distress Tolerance Skills

# Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

What it is:

- A skills-based therapy designed to improve emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal effectiveness, particularly under conditions of high emotional intensity

What the evidence shows:

- Moderate effects on BPD (severity, self-harm, suicidality, psychosocial functioning)
- Improvement for depression, anxiety, and PTSD, when emotional dysregulation is a core feature

# TIPP Skills

For times of overwhelm

## TIP Skills: Changing Your Body Chemistry

To reduce extreme emotion mind *fast*.

Remember these as **TIP** skills:

**T**

### **TIP THE TEMPERATURE of your face with COLD WATER\*** (to calm down fast)

- Holding your breath, put your face in a bowl of cold water, or hold a cold pack (or zip-lock bag of cold water) on your eyes and cheeks.
- Hold for 30 seconds. Keep water above 50°F.

**I**

### **INTENSE EXERCISE\*** (to calm down your body when it is revved up by emotion)

- Engage in intense exercise, if only for a short while.
- Expend your body's stored up physical energy by running, walking fast, jumping, playing basketball, lifting weights, etc.

**P**

### **PACED BREATHING** (pace your breathing by slowing it down)

- Breathe deeply into your belly.
- Slow your pace of inhaling and exhaling way down (on average, five to six breaths per minute).
- Breathe *out* more slowly than you breathe *in* (for example, 5 seconds in and 7 seconds out).

### **PAIRED MUSCLE RELAXATION** (to calm down by pairing muscle relaxation with breathing out)

- While breathing into your belly deeply tense your body muscles (*not* so much as to cause a cramp).
- Notice the tension in your body.
- While breathing out, say the word "Relax" in your mind.
- Let go of the tension.
- Notice the difference in your body.

- **Training tip:**

- Lift the light weights first

- **Rx:**

- Panic, overwhelm

- **Troubleshooting:**

- Keep it accessible

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# Cognitive Reframing Tools

1. Cognitive Strategies - CBT “lite”

# cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

What it is:

- A structured, time-limited therapy that targets the relationships between thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and physiology to reduce distress and improve functioning.

What the evidence shows:

- Moderate to large improvements in depression, anxiety, PTSD, OCD, and eating disorders
- Modest effects for psychotic and bipolar disorders
- Similar effects with CBT in primary care settings (depression and anxiety)

# “Mini” thought Record

Thoughts are not facts

## Situation

Something happens. This step covers only the *facts* of what happened, without any interpretation.

A coworker, who I'm usually friendly with, walked past me in the hallway without saying "hello".

## Thought

Using thought, you interpret the situation. These interpretations are not always accurate. There are many ways to think about the same situation.

### My Actual Thought

What did I do wrong? Why is she mad at me?

### Alternate Thought

She didn't even notice me. She must have a lot on her mind.

## Feeling

You experience emotions based upon your thoughts about the situation.

- Hurt
- Offended

- Unfazed
- Neutral

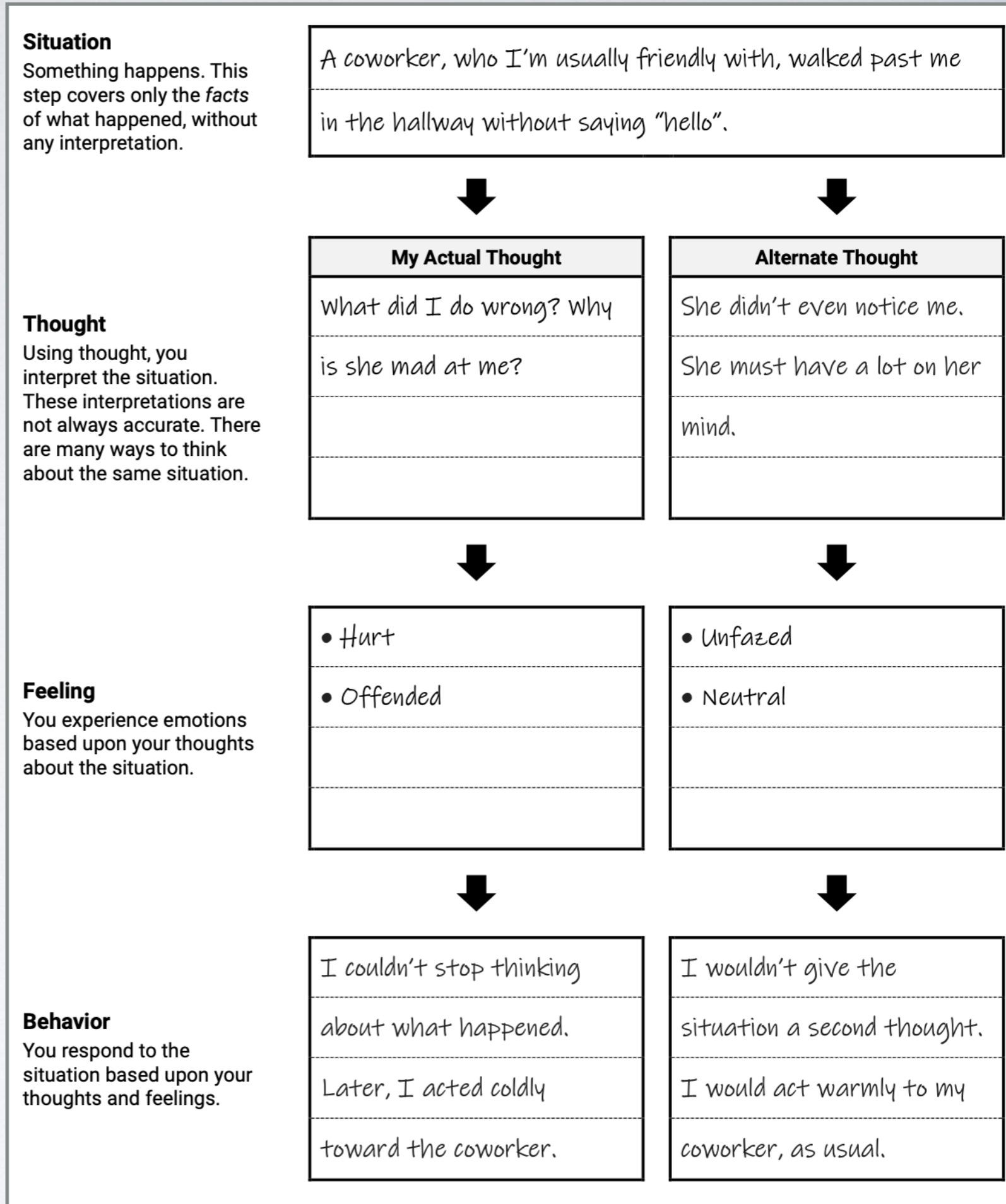
## Behavior

You respond to the situation based upon your thoughts and feelings.

I couldn't stop thinking about what happened. Later, I acted coldly toward the coworker.

I wouldn't give the situation a second thought. I would act warmly to my coworker, as usual.

- **Training tip:**
  - Balance, not positivity
  - “Is there a more neutral way to see this?”
- **Rx:**
  - Notice → reframe → observe
- **Troubleshooting:**
  - Caution: OCD
  - If stuck, focus on *workability*



# Cognitive Reframing Tools

## 2. ACT and the concept of Workability

# Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

What it is:

- A values-based approach that increases psychological flexibility by changing how patients relate to thoughts and symptoms.

What the evidence shows:

- Moderate-large effect for depressive symptoms
- Short-term effects for anxiety disorders
- Research ongoing re: psychosis, OCD, substance use disorders

# Workability

## Choosing what matters

The whole ACT model rests on a key concept: **workability**. And to determine workability, we ask ourselves this question:

***“Is what I’m doing working to give me the sort of life I want, in the long term?”***

If the answer is **yes**, then we say it’s “workable,” so there’s no need to change it

And if the answer is **no**, then we say it’s “unworkable,” in which case, we can consider alternatives that may work better.

So in ACT, we don’t focus on whether a thought is true or false, but whether it is workable.

In other words, we want to know if a thought helps us move toward a richer, fuller, and more meaningful life.

To determine this, we may ask ourselves questions like:

***“If I let this thought guide my behaviour, will that help me create a richer, fuller, and more meaningful life?”***

***“If I hold on to this thought tightly, does it help me to be the person I want to be, and do the things I want to do?”***

*FYI - behaviours can be OVERT (things you do with your body, that others can see) or COVERT (processes that take place in your mind like rumination and worry).*

- **Training tip:**

- Focus on workability, not truth
- “How helpful is that thought?”

- **Rx:**

- Notice → label → choose

- **Troubleshooting:**

- Shift from symptom control → *values*

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CBT-i

CBT for insomnia

# CBT for Insomnia (CBT-i)

What it is:

- A structured behavioural treatment that retrains sleep through stimulus control, sleep scheduling, and cognitive strategies.

What the evidence shows:

- First-line treatment for chronic insomnia
- Benefits persist beyond treatment period

## 10 TIPS for BETTER SLEEP

### 1 Go to bed at the right time



Set a bedtime and don't get into bed before it. Choose a later bedtime if you are spending a lot of time in bed awake. Stay up past your bedtime if not sleepy.



### 2 The ≈20 minute rule



Does your mind race after turning off the light? You can end this nightly pattern by leaving the bed when it takes too long, about 20 minutes or so, to fall asleep (or fall back to sleep). Do something relaxing and return to bed when sleepy. Repeat as needed. **Important:** Don't look at the clock. Estimate when you think it is time to leave the bed.



### 3 Get up each morning at the same time



If you can, sleep until it is your planned time to rise and start your day. Don't sleep or stay in bed past your rise time, regardless of how late you were up the night before.



### 4 Nap wisely



Don't nap if you don't need to. Avoid napping by getting active (ex. 20-minute walk). When a nap can't be avoided, limit yourself to a 10–20 minute power nap. Finish your nap before 3 pm.



### 5 Spend less time in bed



Do you spend a lot of time awake in bed *hoping* for sleep? This can lead to tension and sleep anxiety making it harder to sleep. Spending *less* time in bed (temporarily) can lead to the unexpected benefit of a better sleep with fewer interruptions. As your sleep improves, gradually extend your time in bed using a sleep diary to track your sleep.



### 6 Distract your mind



It is hard to fall asleep when your mind is active – worrying about finances, health, relationships, or tomorrow's to-do list. Give your mind a chance to slow down and let sleep take over. Try these distraction techniques to help you fall asleep:

- **Grocery cart exercise:** using your imagination, slowly walk through a grocery store and fill your cart, paying close, detailed attention to each item you select.
- **Word list challenge:** think of a 5-letter word and come up with 5-10 words that start with each letter of the word. Add variety by choosing a theme – animals, names, cities, etc.



### 7 Take time to relax



Before getting into bed, there are many ways to prepare your body and mind for sleep. Add a relaxation technique to your bedtime routine that lets you do this. Examples include: low light reading before getting into bed, the 4-7-8 breathing exercise, and toe-to-head progressive muscle tightening and relaxing.



### 8 Make being in bed about being asleep



Use your bed only for sleep, sex, and sickness. Avoid reading, writing, socializing, working, or snuggling with pets in bed. Turn off screens well before getting into bed.



### 9 Bust your sleep myths



*Worrying* about getting enough sleep can actually keep you up at night. Needing 8 hours of sleep every night is a myth. Less than 7 is enough for some. Most feel well rested with 7 to 9 hours a night. What are your sleep myths? Busting them might be a part of what helps you sleep.



### 10 Healthy sleep habits start during the day



Having an active body and mind during the day is important for your mental, physical, and sleep health. This starts with bright light in the morning. Can you add more light right after waking up and more daytime activities that energize your body and mind?



# CBT-i

1. Stimulus Control
2. Sleep Restriction
3. Cognitive Restructuring
4. Sleep hygiene
5. Relaxation training



Control



Sleep Drive



Relax



Thoughts



Hygiene

## • Training tip:

- Sleep change is gradual
- Not fixing sleep, but retraining it

## • Rx:

- Pick 3 behaviours for this week

## • Troubleshooting:

- Start with low-hanging fruit
- Consistency beats intensity

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Control



Sleep Drive



Relax



Thoughts



Hygiene


# Additional Resources

1. There's an app for that


# Anxiety - Mindshift CBT



<https://www.anxietycanada.com/>

**How are you today, Deborah?** 

Use the slider to describe how you're feeling.

OK 



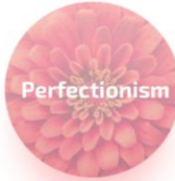
I'm feeling ok. **Submit** →

[View Check-In Summary](#)

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



**My Anxiety** [Learn More](#)

What are you experiencing?

**Tools**


Choose a tool to help manage your anxiety.


    


Home Community Goals Share


← **Chill Zone**


**Audio 1** **Audio 2**


 **Calm Breathing** 2 mins  
Slow down your breathing to help your body calm down.

 **Tense and Release** 6 mins  
Tense and relax all of the muscles in your body, one at a time.






 **Mental Vacation** 4 mins  
Imagine a peaceful place that can help you feel calmer.

 **Test Anxiety** 5 mins  
Imagine yourself doing well on the test beforehand to feel more confident.

 **Social Anxiety** 5 mins  
Visualize yourself feeling confident in a social situation to help you manage.


 **Public Speaking** 4 mins  
Imagine yourself successfully speaking in front of others to feel more confident.

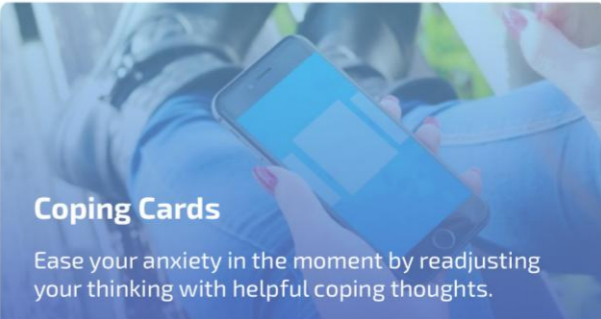
**Out of this World** 5 mins

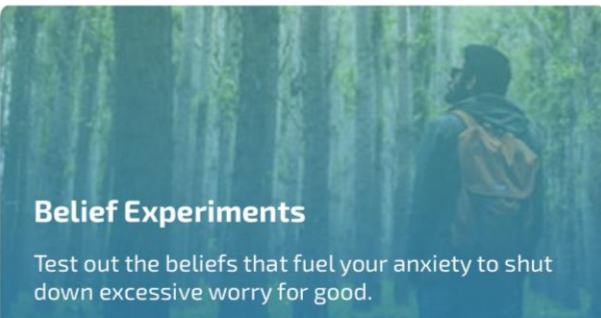
    






Home Community Goals Share

← **Healthy Thinking**

  
**Thought Journal**  
Untwist your anxious thinking to get perspective and become a more balanced thinker.

  
**Coping Cards**  
Ease your anxiety in the moment by readjusting your thinking with helpful coping thoughts.

  
**Belief Experiments**  
Test out the beliefs that fuel your anxiety to shut down excessive worry for good.

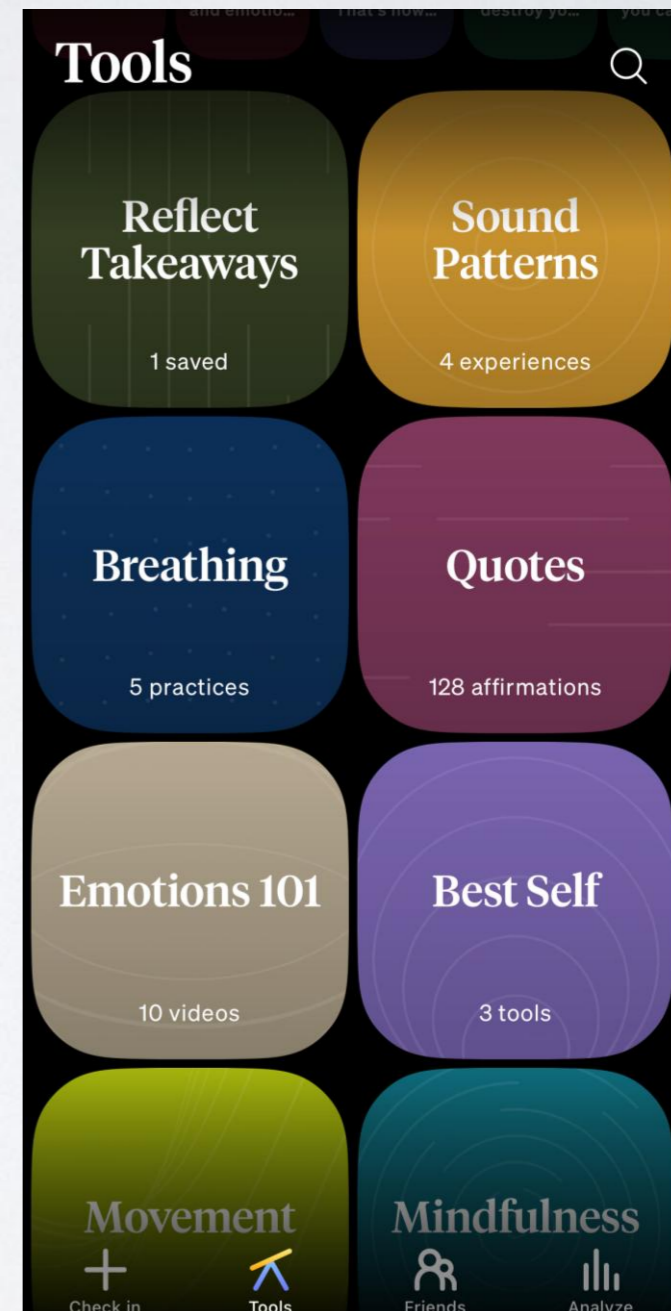
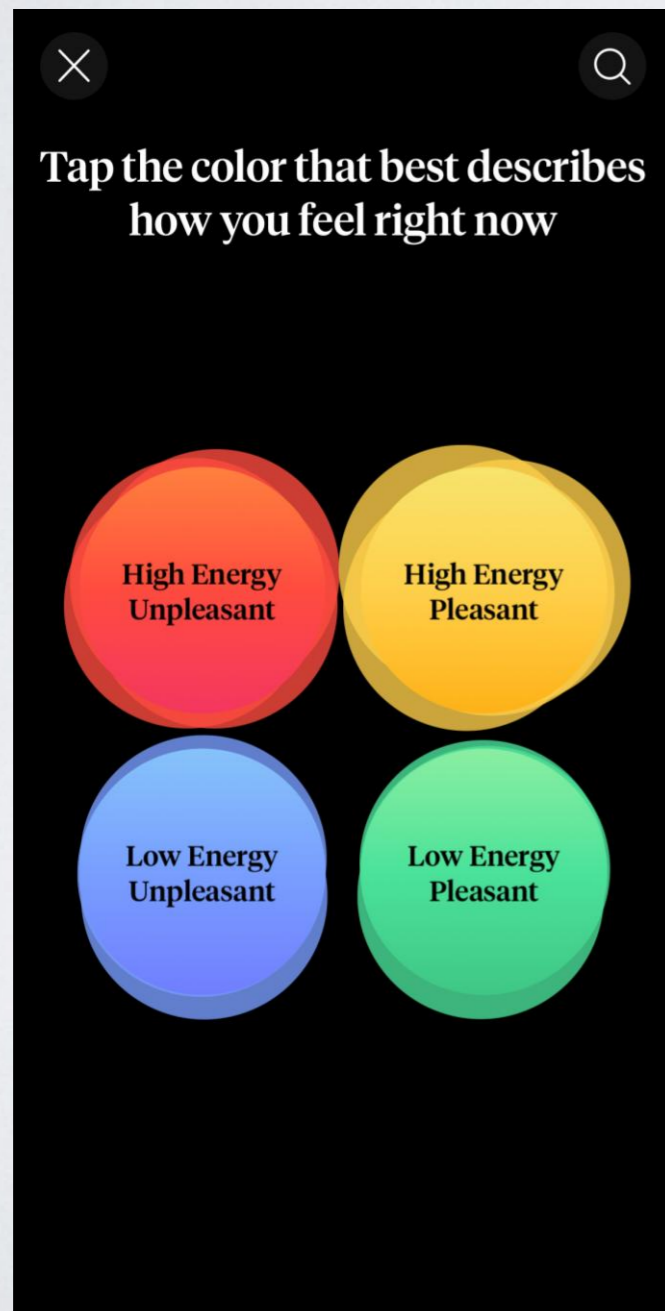
    

Home Community Goals Share

# Emotions - How We Feel



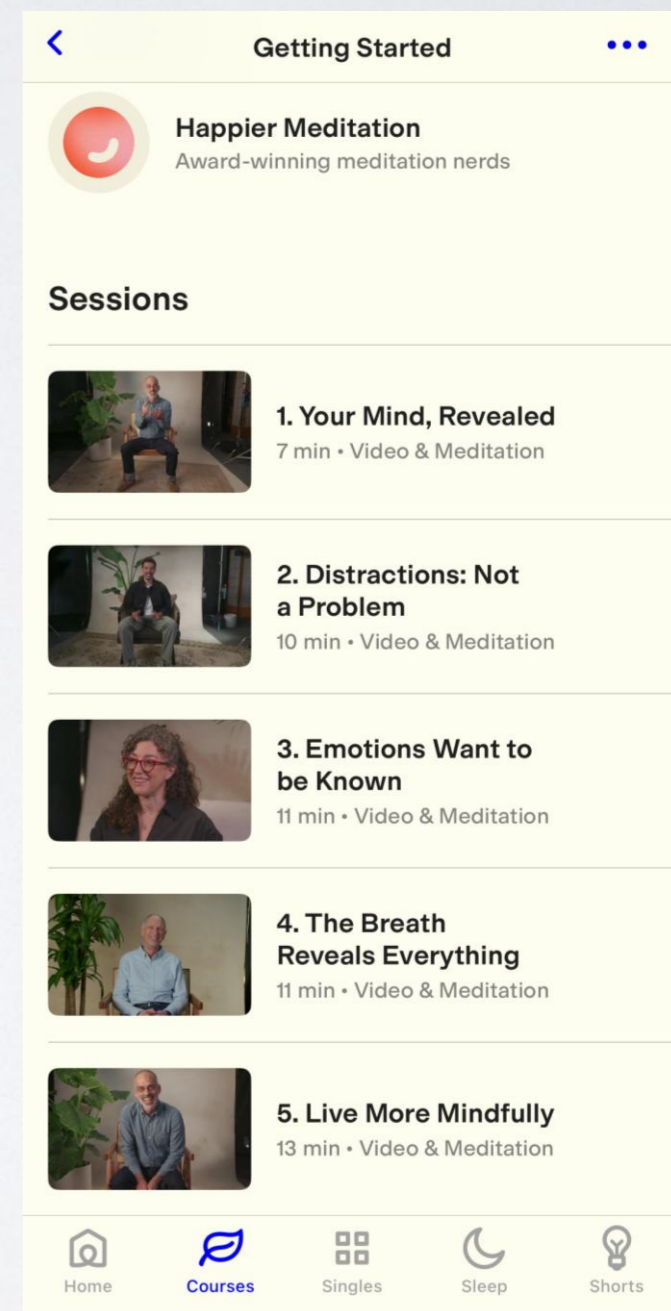
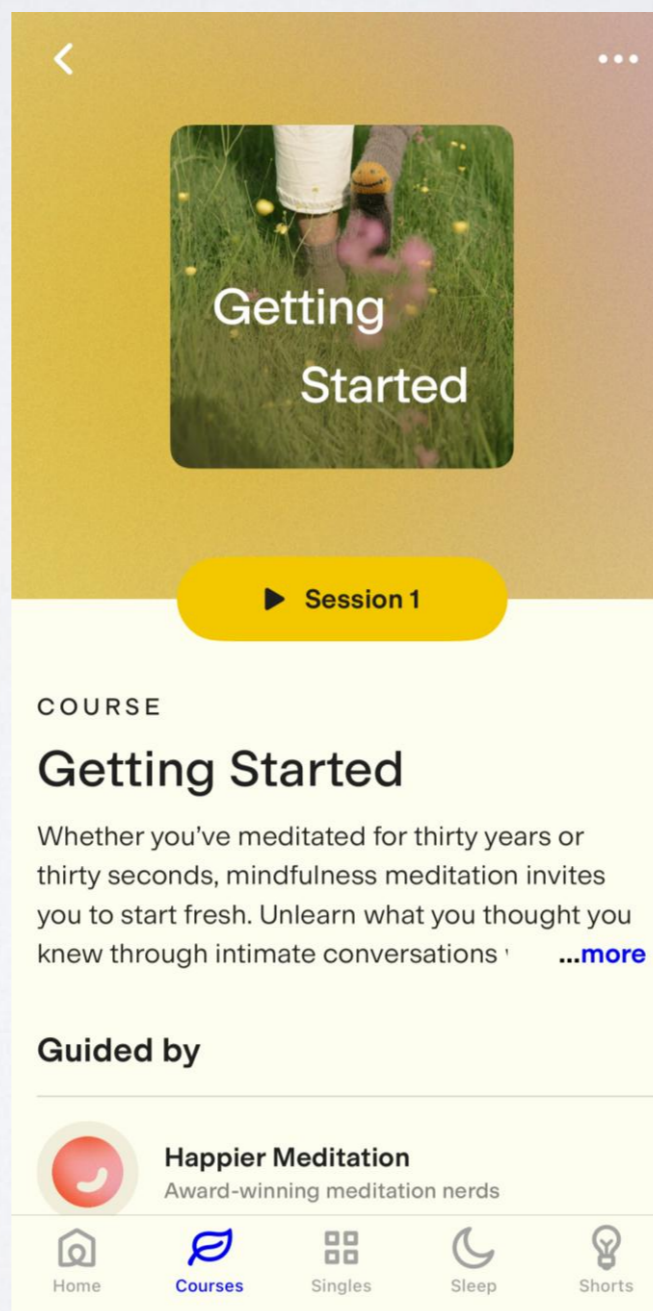
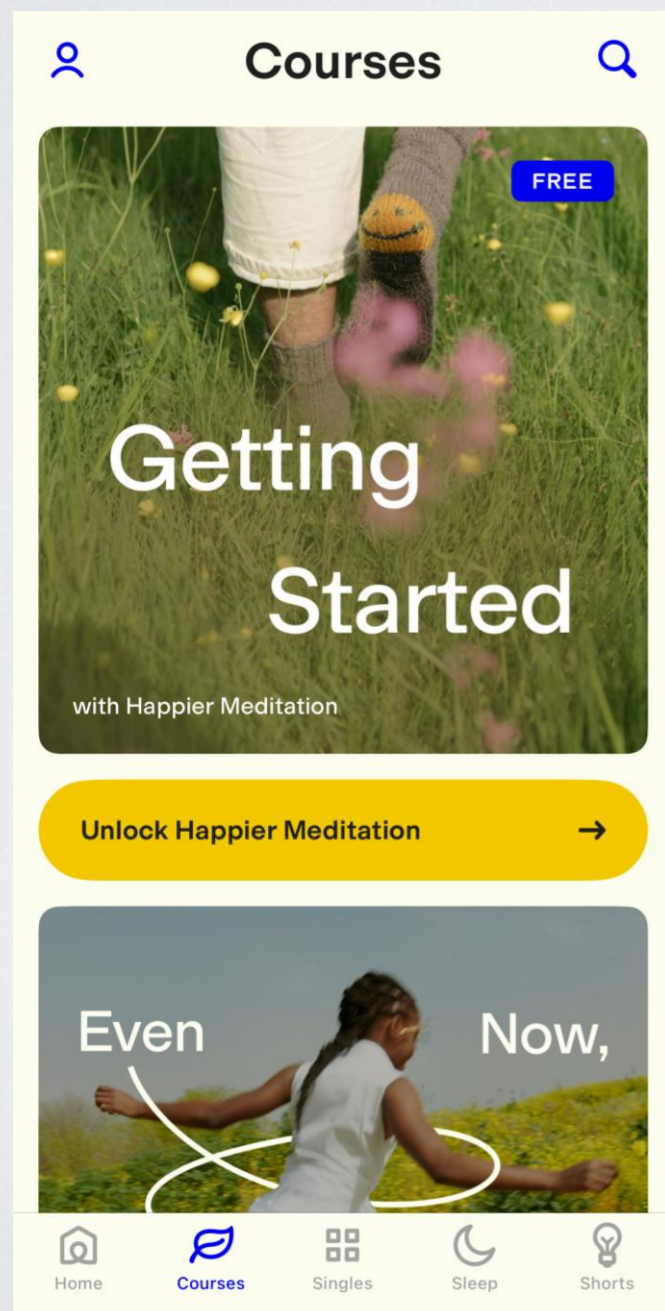
<https://howwefeel.org/>



# Mindfulness - Happier



<https://www.meditatehappier.com/>



# Additional Resources

## 2. Websites

www.reconnectmindfulness.ca



[Our Programs](#)

[Understanding Mindfulness](#)

[Our Faculty](#)

[Contact Us](#)

# Pause. Breathe. Reconnect.

The Reconnect Centre for Mindfulness is dedicated to improving mental well-being by making evidence-based mindfulness programs accessible to individuals, caregivers, and communities. Building on this commitment, we provide education and training that support resilience and balance - expanding access across Canada and beyond, while also strengthening the capacity of professionals to deliver high-quality mindfulness education.



Accessibility

Display a menu

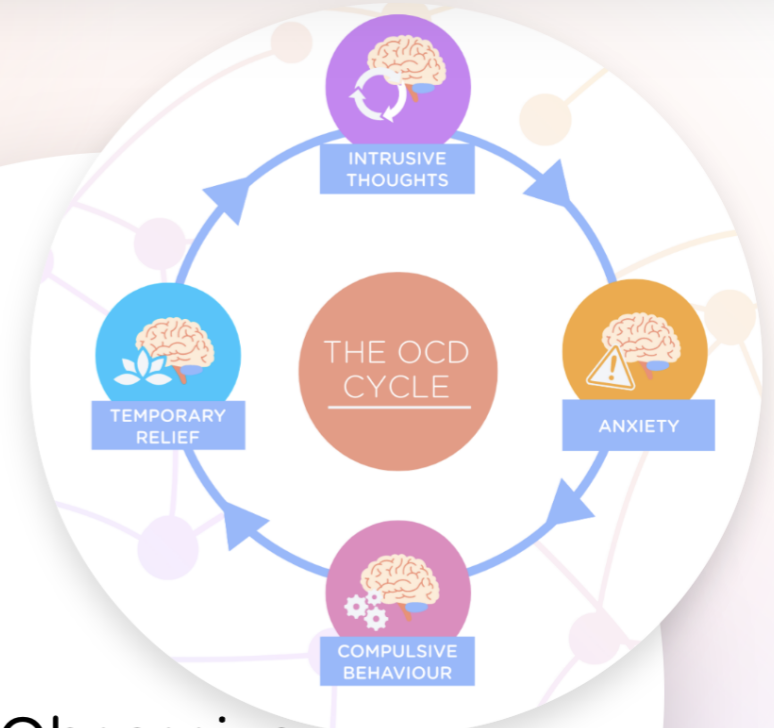
**Why Mindfulness Why Now**

# Welcome to Anxiety Canada

## RESOURCES, RELIEF & RESULTS

Our mission is to reduce the barrier of anxiety and related disorders so people can live the life they want. We offer trusted resources and programs to help individuals find relief from anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).

How can we help you today?



01

[Feature page](#)

## What is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)?

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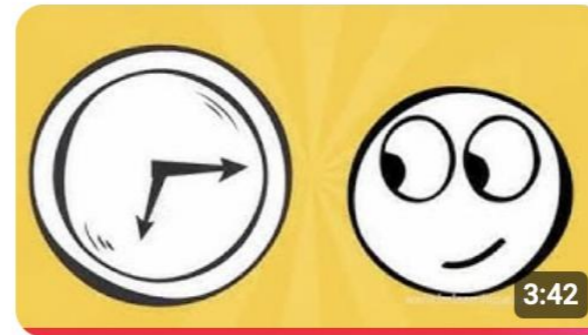
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The Happiness Trap: Evolution of the Human Mind

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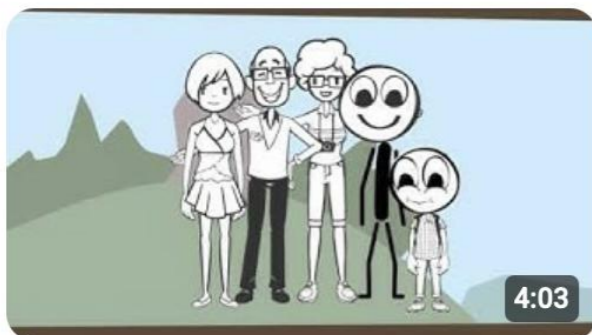
Values vs Goals - By Dr. Russ Harris

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The Choice Point: A Map for a Meaningful Life

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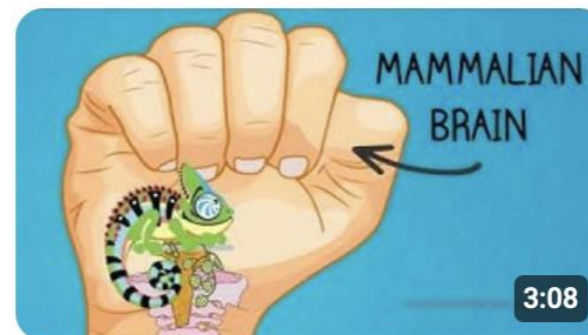
The 3 Happiness Myths

687K views · 9 years ago



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The Three Main Parts Of Your Brain by Dr. Russ Harris

499K views · 9 years ago



FACE COVID - How To Respond Effectively To The Corona Crisis

466K views · 5 years ago

<https://mysleepwell.ca/>



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*Sleepwell*

**It's no dream.  
Sleep well without sleeping pills.**

**Get your sleep back with CBTi.**



Putting it all together

# Emotional Regulation

Mindfulness  
(Grounding)

4-7-8 Breathing  
5-Senses

DBT  
(Distress  
Tolerance)

TIPP Skills

# Cognitive Reframing

CBT

Mini Thought  
Record

ACT

Workability

CBT-i

Self-management resources

# Putting it all together

- Regulate first, think later
- Brief tools can make a difference
- Growth happens at home (with practice)
- Gradual progress over time

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## Digital & Patient Resources

- Anxiety Canada. <https://www.anxietycanada.com>
- CBT-i Coach App. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs & Department of Defense. <https://mobile.va.gov/app/cbt-i-coach>
- How We Feel App. <https://howwefeel.org>
- Happier Meditation App. <https://www.happier.com>
- Current Evidence on the Efficacy of Mental Health Smartphone apps for Symptoms of Depression and Anxiety. A Meta-Analysis of 176 Randomized Controlled Trials. *World Psychiatry : Official Journal of the World Psychiatric Association*. 2024. Linardon J, Torous J, Firth J, et al.
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