

# **Teen Anxiety Program Workbook**

# Introduction

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Clarity Pediatrics' **Teen Anxiety Program (TAP)** is based on Seattle Children's First Approach Skills Training for Child and Adolescent Anxiety program (FAST-A) and is designed to help teens manage excessive anxiety that interferes with their daily functioning. The program focuses on addressing "false alarm" anxiety—worries that are unrealistic or unlikely to happen and that lead to avoidance or high distress in day-to-day situations. It is a group-based intervention, ideally for 8-10 families, and involves eight (8) sessions attended by teens and their support person (typically a parent/primary caregiver). The program is led by two (2) licensed behavioral health providers.

A core component of TAP is "**brave practice**" (also known as exposure therapy), which involves facing feared situations to help teens learn that what they fear is not as likely or dangerous as they imagine, and that they can handle anxious feelings. This includes identifying specific fears, creating a "fear ladder" with easy to hard steps, and engaging in planned exposures, both during group sessions and as at-home practice. The program also emphasizes recognizing and reducing "safety behaviors," which are unnecessary actions taken to feel safer but that can inadvertently maintain anxiety. Teens track their progress and are encouraged to reward themselves for engaging in brave practice.

**Caregiver involvement is crucial**, with sessions designed to orient parents or support persons to the program's goals and teach them how to best support the teen's brave practice. The program provides guidance on fostering independence, encouraging consistent practice, and offering appropriate rewards.

Overall, TAP aims to **reduce anxiety, improve independence, and build confidence** in teens by empowering them to confront their fears and learn effective coping strategies. Following the TAP approach will teach teens to respond effectively to current and future anxiety challenges as they arise. The program is most effective when the teen and their support person consistently attend weekly sessions and implement the strategies discussed. It is important to understand that, like many evidence-based approaches, change through TAP tends to be gradual. It can feel hard at first; however, with consistency and support, the changes that teens are learning to make can lead to meaningful and lasting improvements in their ability to manage anxiety independently.

*Continued on the next page*

# Introduction

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We will be covering a lot of material in TAP. For some families, the amount of information can feel overwhelming. Others may face outside challenges that make it difficult to implement new strategies each week. The goal of TAP is not perfection, but steady progress. We understand that sometimes families need to pause in order to address more urgent concerns (e.g., medical needs, school issues, housing or financial stress). If that's the case, you are always welcome to rejoin a TAP group when the time is right for your family.

We recognize that every family brings unique values, cultural backgrounds, and relational styles to this work. Our goal in TAP is to honor and work within your family's values and structure, and to help teens choose goals and strategies that feel meaningful and achievable for them.

A note on these materials: Much of the material in this workbook was originally developed by Nathaniel Jungbluth, Ph.D., Jennifer B. Blossom, Ph.D., and Kendra Read, Ph.D. at Seattle Children's Hospital. We are grateful for their permission to use these resources.

# Group Guidelines

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- Join from 2 devices (using the same link)
- Turn on your video
- Mute when not talking
- Use the chat, hand raising, and “reaction” emojis to participate in group
- Keep your and other group members’ information private
- Be respectful of everyone!
  - Be present vs multitasking
  - Allow space for all to share
- Do not join the session if you are driving or calling from a public place. Park and find a private location before joining the session.

## **Parents and caregivers:**

- Attend all sessions with your teen. This will help orient you to what teens are working on so you can be most supportive.
- Help your teen between sessions by encouraging and rewarding brave practice.

# Session 1: What is anxiety?

Anxiety is the uncomfortable feeling we all get when we think something bad might happen. It is a **normal, natural** feeling that everyone has.

What words do you use to describe anxiety?



**Why anxiety is your friend ... usually**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLBz25JFtqU>

What changes do you notice in your body when you are anxious?

# Flight, Fight or Freeze

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**Head:** changes in your brain

**Eyes:** eyes open wider

**Sweat:** sweating cools the body down

**Heart:** beats faster to get extra blood, oxygen, and energy to your body

**Stomach:** energy flows away from the digestive tract

**Lungs:** breathe faster to get more oxygen to your brain and muscles

**Muscles:** extra energy is sent to big muscles

**Skin:** blood moves away from the surface of the skin



# Doing Brave Practice Worksheet

You can use this sheet to plan your brave practices.

## Before you start:

List exactly what you will do to face your fear. (Be specific about what you will do and for how long.)

What are you afraid will happen if you do this? (Be specific.)

How high do you think your anxiety will get? Rate it on a scale from 0 (*totally calm, no anxiety*) to 10 (*the most anxious you've ever been*).

What is a reward you can have for facing your fear successfully?

## After you finish:

Were you able to follow your plan to face your fears?

How did your experience compare to what you were afraid would happen? What surprised you?

What did you learn? What evidence do you have that you can handle the situation?

How high did your anxiety get? Rate on a scale from 0 (*totally calm, no anxiety*) to 10 (*the most anxious you've ever been*).

## Pro Tip



Plan **daily practices** for this week on the next page!

Making brave practice a daily habit helps anxiety improve faster.

# Daily Brave Practice Worksheet

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Doing brave practice every day will help you overcome anxiety much quicker!

| Date ->                         | / | / | / | / | / | / | / |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What I will practice this week  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| My reward for practicing        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Highest anxiety rating (0 - 10) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| What did you learn?             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

# Session 1: Home Practice

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1) Who is your support person? When is a good time to check in each week about home practice?

2) Complete the worksheet: “Like ice cream, there are many different flavors of anxiety”

# Like ice cream, there are many different flavors of anxiety

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You may struggle with some flavors below, but not others. Many of these things would make most people anxious or worried.

Mark the situations below that usually make you feel really, upset, or have started to get in the way of your life.

## Being away from family

- being apart from your parents or other caregivers, during the day or at night
- staying at school or in class

## Social stuff

- worry that people might think something bad about you or laugh at you, or that you will be embarrassed
- speaking to new people
- answering questions in class
- eating or using a bathroom in public
- standing up for yourself

## Worrying

- worrying that something bad might happen to you or people you love (health and safety)
- doing well enough in school or other activities (e.g. dance, music, sports)
- your future
- things going on in the world or in your community (e.g. politics, crime)
- natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes, tornados)
- family stress (e.g. divorce, parents fighting, money)
- worry about little things that have happened in the past

## Specific fears

- fears of specific animals (e.g. dogs, spiders, insects), heights, storms, the dark, vomiting, needles/shots, choking or something else very specific

## Feelings in your body

- feeling anxious in your body (e.g. difficulty breathing, heart racing, feeling dizzy, nauseous) out of the blue
- wanting to avoid places where you've felt anxious in your body before

## Other stuff

- not making mistakes or being perfect
- thoughts about being dirty, touching germs or chemicals
- thoughts that are scary, violent or sexual that make you feel really afraid
- worries that you might do something that you do not want to do
- having to do things repeatedly (washing, checking things, asking questions) or in a certain order or routine, otherwise you feel anxious

# Flavors of anxiety, cont.

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Pick one or two anxiety problems you'd like to work on during this program.

How will your life be different when you overcome these fears or worries?

# Session 2: False Alarms

In this group, we'll focus on anxiety false alarms. However, many of us also experience anxiety that is not a false alarm. It's important to know the difference.

 **WATCH NOW** Anxiety about real problems

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tduVLNUu6GE>

Do you have a real problem or danger that is causing you anxiety? Write it here:

|                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| My real danger/problem | What I worry will happen |
|------------------------|--------------------------|

With your support person, consider ...

Is there a **SKILL** I can learn (like what to say or do) that could help me with the real problem?

*Example: how to deal with someone teasing you*

Would **MAKING A PLAN** help me with this real problem? If so, brainstorm ideas about what could help, then choose a plan to try.

*Example: to pass my test, I will make flashcards and spend 20 minutes per day studying*

Should we actually **CHANGE THE SITUATION** somehow, to help deal with the real danger or problems?

*Example: go home a different way to avoid the dangerous street*

*Continued on the next page*

# Session 2: False Alarms

## MY PLAN

**What** I will do:

**When** I will do it:

Any **help or support** I will need:

What are **challenges or obstacles** that could get in the way?

How could I overcome those?

### Pro Tip



*If your plan is tricky, practice it with your support person.*

In your next meeting with your support person, review:

Were you able to do your plan? Do you need to change your plan, or try something different?

Next, we'll focus on anxiety that's related to false alarms:

- Worries that are **unrealistic or unlikely** to happen
- Situations where we **overestimate** the amount of danger



### Fixing anxiety false alarms

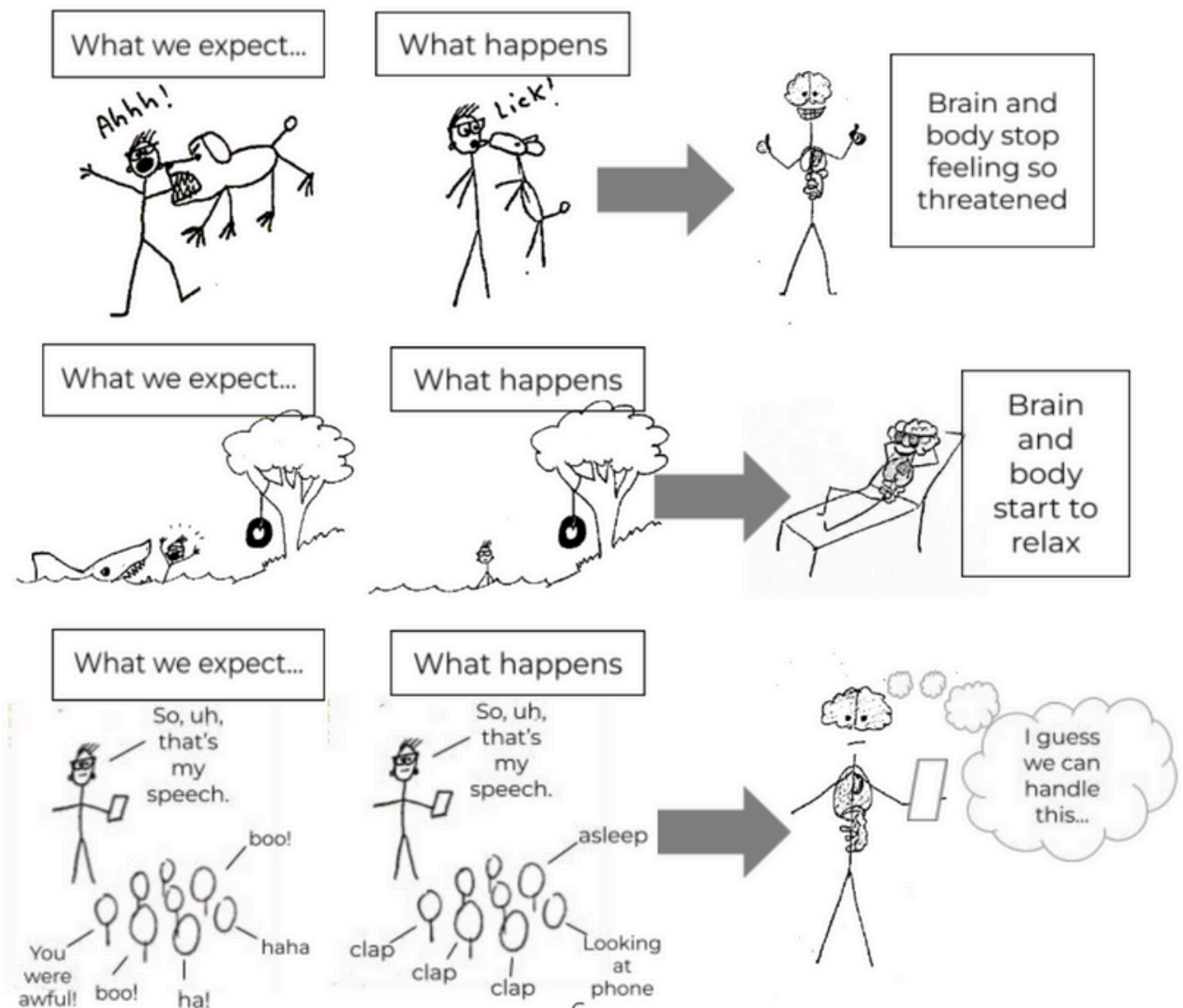
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzPsaIYoXpQ>

As the video explains, brave practice is about facing our unrealistic fears to learn:

- What we fear **isn't so likely**
- What we fear **isn't so bad**, or
- What we fear is **something we can handle**

*Continued on the next page*

# Session 2: False Alarms



## Session 2: False Alarms

For home practice, you identified some anxiety problems you want to work on. Write one of them down in your workbook.

Next, try to list all the different ways you've been avoiding this fear.

**EXAMPLE 1:** Ways Will has been avoiding his fear of the dark:

- Sleeping with the light on and door open
- Checking closets and door locks before bed
- Skipping sleep overs
- Avoiding nighttime activities like campfires
- Avoiding movie theaters, basements, dark rooms
- Keeping house lights on (like during family movie night)
- Not staying home alone

**EXAMPLE 2:** Ways Aliyah has been avoiding her fear of meeting and talking to new people:

- Not talking much at school, avoiding eye contact with peers
- Sitting alone at lunch
- Not raising hand in class
- Staying home sick when she had to give a presentation
- Arriving to school at the last minute to avoid feeling awkward before school
- Parents ordering food for her at restaurants
- Staying away from places (like the mall) where other teens hang out
- Only having online hobbies (no sports or clubs)

# Session 2: False Alarms

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Can you think of times when **real life didn't match your fears**?

Times when the things you were scared of turned out **better than you expected**?

What happened to your anxiety?

# Session 2: Home Practice

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1) Choose one fear from your list. Keep track of ways you tried to avoid the fear this week.

2) This group focuses on anxiety false alarms. You can use the tips in this workbook with your support person at home to help you plan for how to manage real problems.

# Session 3: Planning Brave Practice

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Check out these tips for making brave practice work best:

## 1. It's OK to start easy.

You don't have to face the really scary stuff right away if you don't want to. You can start with easier steps and move on to harder stuff.

## 2. Choose the right practice.

Pick brave practices that can **help you reach your goals** and **test out your specific fears**. This sometimes means doing unusual things, like making mistakes on purpose, to see if what you fear really happens.

## 3. Ride the anxiety waves.

When we face our fears, our anxiety usually goes up and down, like waves in the ocean. That's normal! Having the anxiety go up and down when we face fears helps us learn.

Brave practice is also a lot like exercising - when it feels hard, that is a sign you are getting a **really good workout**, and you are teaching your brain a lot.

## 4. Stay until you learn.

When we face our fears, it is important to **stay in the situation** long enough for our brain and body to **learn something new**.

Depending on the fear, this might be 5, 10 or even 30 minutes. If we get freaked out and run away, this can make our fears even bigger.

So, try to stay in the situation until you can tell your brain is learning:

*Maybe my fear isn't so likely*

*Maybe this isn't so bad*

*Maybe I can handle things like this*

*Continued on the next page*

# Session 3: Planning Brave Practice



**Planning brave practices**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFQpEBACDt0>

What is something you want to be able to do after you overcome this fear?

## MY GOAL

# Retrain your Brain with Brave Practice Workouts!

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MY GOAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Try to think of 10 brave practices that could help you face your fear and reach your goal. Include practices that would be easy, medium and hard for you to do.

## Harder Steps

## Medium Steps

## Easier Steps

### Pro Tip



*Unlike with lifting weights, for brave practice you can skip right to the harder workouts for faster results! See the next page for more examples of brave practice that have helped other people overcome their anxiety.*

# Retrain your Brain with Brave Practice Workouts!

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## Aliyah's Brave Practice Examples

### Easy

- Talk to an adult relative I don't usually talk to. Keep it going 10 minutes even if it gets awkward.
- Walk around neighborhood and nod to people I see
- Walk around neighborhood and say "hi" and smile at people
- Call to order take-out food
- Video chat with a cousin my age I don't know well

### Medium

- Start a conversation with a coffee shop or grocery cashier
- Ask someone at grocery store if they have apples
- When I walk into class, nod to other students
- Walk around the cafeteria and nod at other students
- Test myself: See how many classmates I can say "hi" to in a day!

### Hard

- Ask classmate a question about an assignment
- Ask someone at the grocery store if they have apples, while standing next to the apples
- Give someone a compliment
- Ask classmate about something they have (a phone, a shirt with a band or sports team name)
- Sit with new people at a lunch table, join the conversation

# Session 3: Choose Rewards

Facing fears is hard work, and knowing that a reward will follow can make doing brave practice much easier.

Rewards can be something you can give yourself or something a parent or caregiver gives you.

Can you think of small rewards you could earn for completing daily brave practices? Good examples are small items, privileges, treats, or fun activities.

Write ideas here:

Sometimes families decide on **bigger rewards** that can be earned over time. Parents/caregivers can assign point values to each large reward and the youth can earn points by doing their brave practices. Harder brave practices can be worth more points!

| Large reward idea | Points to earn it |
|-------------------|-------------------|
|                   |                   |
|                   |                   |
|                   |                   |

Just remember: The **true reward** is overcoming your anxiety! These rewards are only a bonus to recognize and encourage your hard work along the way.

# Session 3: Home Practice

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- 1) Finish the “retrain your brain” worksheet today or tomorrow by adding additional ideas if you still need them.
- 2) Pick a brave practice activity that makes you pretty nervous (at least a 4-5 out of 10) and do it regularly. Use the next page to help you plan and keep track of your practices.

# Daily Brave Practice Worksheet

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Doing brave practice every day will help you overcome anxiety much quicker!

| Date ->                         | / | / | / | / | / | / | / |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What I will practice this week  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| My reward for practicing        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Highest anxiety rating (0 - 10) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| What did you learn?             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

# Session 4: Safety Behaviors

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Let's talk more about things we do when we're nervous that help us to feel safer. We'll learn how to know when those things are helpful (a good idea) or unhelpful (a safety behavior) for overcoming anxiety.

 **WATCH NOW** Safety behaviors

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOwTlcz3R74>

If you aren't sure whether something is a **safety behavior** or a **good idea**, check with your parent, caregiver, or a health care provider to see what they think.

In general, use "**reasonable risk**" to determine what makes something an unhelpful safety behavior. We can think of this as how an average group of people who do not have significant anxiety might evaluate the risk in the given situation.

In the end, people can make different choices about how much risk they want to accept. But keep in mind, doing too much safety behavior can make us more anxious and preoccupied.

Write down your safety behaviors and review the list with your support person to see what they might have noticed.

*Continued on the next page*

# Session 4: Safety Behaviors

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Sometimes thinking about safety behaviors also helps us get ideas about what to put on our brave practice list, so if you have more brave practice ideas after completing this exercise, feel free to add them!

## How to do brave practice

**Step 1:** What do you think will happen?

**Step 2:** What is your worry level between 0 - 10 right now? 0 = totally calm, 10 = most scared

**Step 3:** Do the brave practice

**Step 4:** What is your anxiety level now? How does that compare to your rating from before?

**Step 5:** Debrief

*How did your brave practice experience compare to your fear expectations from step 1?*

*Did anything surprise you?*

**Step 6:** Reward

# Session 4: Home Practice

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1) Review the safety behaviors list with your support person. Are there any additional safety behaviors you can think of?

2) Pick a brave practice activity that makes you a bit more nervous (at least a 5 - 7 out of 10) and do it regularly. Use the next page to help you plan and keep track of your practices.

# Daily Brave Practice Worksheet

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Doing brave practice every day will help you overcome anxiety much quicker!

| Date ->                         | / | / | / | / | / | / | / |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What I will practice this week  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| My reward for practicing        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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| What did you learn?             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

# Session 5: For Parents & Caregivers



**How support can backfire**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5yGjnMlZwY>

**Accommodation** is when caregivers help kids **avoid** normal, safe situations they are afraid of. Here are 4 types of accommodation that can add to child anxiety over time:

**1. Rescuing:** saving a child from having to do the thing they feel anxious about.

*Examples:*

- *Speaking up for your child when they are too shy to speak*
- *Excusing your child from homework or school when they were behind or missed*

Are there ways you might be rescuing your child from situations you want them to learn to handle?

**2. Avoiding:** steering clear of things that are hard for our child.

*Examples:*

- *Not driving past places your child finds scary*
- *Not taking ferries because your child fears water*
- *Not going on dates because your child is scared to be away from you*
- *Child sleeps with you because of fear to sleep alone*

Are you steering clear of situations you want your child to learn to handle?

# Session 5: For Parents & Caregivers

**3. Too much reassurance:** telling your child bad things won't happen, or things will turn out OK.

*Examples:*

- *Responding repeatedly to your child's questions about when they will be picked up*
- *Repeatedly telling your child nothing bad will happen in situations they find scary*

Are there times you give too much reassurance?

**4. Over-protecting:** giving kids too little independence, or too much help or support, or going overboard in trying to prevent bad outcomes or anxiety.

*Examples:*

- *Asking your child's teacher to let them redo schoolwork when they have a less than perfect but still OK grade*
- *Changing your schedule to make sure your child always arrives early*
- *Solving your child's disputes with their friends or friends' parents*
- *Not letting your child stay home alone for short periods (if age appropriate)*

In what ways would you like to give your child more independence? Keeping in mind their age and abilities

## Pro Tip



*Reducing accommodation, by itself, can help your child overcome their anxiety. BUT, it's much easier if you can get your child to understand and agree with the changes you make, as part of their brave practice plan.*

# Session 5: Home Practice

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1) Pick a brave practice activity that makes you a bit more nervous (at least a 7 out of 10) and do it regularly. Use the next page to help you plan and keep track of your practices.

# Daily Brave Practice Worksheet

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Doing brave practice every day will help you overcome anxiety much quicker!

| Date ->                         | / | / | / | / | / | / | / |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What I will practice this week  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| My reward for practicing        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Highest anxiety rating (0 - 10) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| What did you learn?             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

# Session 6: Overthinking

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What are the kinds of things you usually worry about?

Do any of your recent or most common worries involve real dangers or threats that need your attention? If you and your support person agree that these are real problems you should work on solving now, use the tools in this workbook to help you do that together.

Are there any unrealistic fears that could be faced with brave practice?

Come up with brave practices that could help you with your worries.

*Continued on next page*

# Session 6: Overthinking



## Special tips for worry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X84d96PTwwk>

### “Overthinking” safety behaviors

In the video, you learned about avoidance thinking, also known as **overthinking**. For worries that are *unrealistic, unlikely, not a big deal, or mostly out of your control*, thinking about them a lot probably isn't too helpful. But it's hard to stop!

When you have unrealistic or unlikely fears, do you do any of these things?

- Think about the thing you fear again and again.
- Make unnecessary plans for preventing or dealing with the thing you fear
- Tell yourself again and again that the thing you fear is unlikely to happen
- Think again and again about reasons the thing you fear will probably be OK
- Make lists, or write things down, when you don't really need to
- Ask your parents or caregivers for help when you probably don't need it
- Ask parents or caregivers to tell you things will be OK
- Check and recheck things related to your fear

Overthinking usually makes us feel a little safer, so we keep doing it! If you think you are getting stuck on overthinking that doesn't help you much, try one of these three brave practices for worry:

**1. Brave practice for specific fears.** If you came up with brave practices on the past page, go ahead do those!

See if you notice: *What happens to your worries after a few days of brave practices?*

**2. Worry jar.** Anytime you find yourself worrying, write your worry on a slip of paper and add it to your Worry Jar. Set aside 20-30 minutes once a day to go through your worries with your support person and do what's needed to deal with them. Outside of this worry time, you are not allowed to worry. Instead, do your best to focus on other things.

# Session 6: Overthinking

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See if you notice: *Was it hard to set aside your worries outside?*

*Did it get easier after a few days?*

*Did things turn out OK even when you spent less time worrying?*

*Were you able to enjoy other activities, or feel less anxious, outside your worry time?*

**3. Leaves on a stream.** This technique teaches us to step back and observe thoughts and worries from afar, instead of fighting them and getting caught up in them. There are many scripts, videos, and recordings of this mindfulness exercise online. Find one that you like!

Here is one example (your support person can read it aloud for you, or you can record yourself reading it aloud and play it back):

<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/leaves-on-a-stream-worksheet>

There will always be things outside our control, or things that could take a turn for the worse in the future. The ability to sit with the discomfort of a terrible thing potentially happening without letting it overwhelm you takes practice.

The first step is to understand that no matter how much we worry about certain things, we cannot control them. The best way to manage these situations is to focus on what we can control.

Values are what's really important to you—what matters most in your life. They can be anything—family, friends, doing well in school, having fun, or even just relaxing.

Sometimes, we get so caught up in day-to-day stuff that we forget about our values. For example, someone who really cares about family might get super busy with work or school and end up not spending much time with their loved ones. **Sometimes, our fears, worries, and anxieties also make it hard for us to live according to our values.**

After you complete the values clarification exercise on the next page, consider which values you're actually living by, and which ones might be getting overlooked because of the fear/worry/anxiety. If a value isn't being met, think of what changes you can make (changes within your control) to move you toward your values.

There are no right or wrong answers here—everyone's values are different. Your values might be different from your friends, family, or anyone else, and that's totally normal. Things like your age, your culture, and your experiences all shape what's most important to you.

# Values Clarification

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Your values are the beliefs that define what is most important to you. They guide each of your choices in life. For example, someone who values family might try to spend extra time at home, while someone who values success in their career may do just the opposite. Understanding your values will help you recognize areas of your life need more attention, and what to prioritize in the future.

Select the 10 most important items from the following list. Rank them from 1 - 10 with "1" being the most important item.

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| _____ Love           | _____ Honesty      |
| _____ Wealth         | _____ Humor        |
| _____ Family         | _____ Loyalty      |
| _____ Morals         | _____ Reason       |
| _____ Success        | _____ Independence |
| _____ Knowledge      | _____ Achievement  |
| _____ Power          | _____ Beauty       |
| _____ Friends        | _____ Spirituality |
| _____ Free Time      | _____ Respect      |
| _____ Adventure      | _____ Peace        |
| _____ Variety        | _____ Stability    |
| _____ Calmness       | _____ Wisdom       |
| _____ Freedom        | _____ Fairness     |
| _____ Fun            | _____ Creativity   |
| _____ Recognition    | _____ Relaxation   |
| _____ Nature         | _____ Safety       |
| _____ Popularity     | _____ _____        |
| _____ Responsibility | _____ _____        |

# Session 6: Home Practice

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- 1) Pick a brave practice activity that makes you a bit more nervous (at least an 8 out of 10) and do it regularly. Use the next page to help you plan and keep track of your practices.
- 2) Notice if you are engaging in overthinking behaviors. Pick a brave practice for worry.

# Daily Brave Practice Worksheet

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Doing brave practice every day will help you overcome anxiety much quicker!

| Date ->                         | / | / | / | / | / | / | / |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What I will practice this week  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| My reward for practicing        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Highest anxiety rating (0 - 10) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| What did you learn?             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

# Session 7: For Parents & Caregivers

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## Growing bravery

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGj4ABmm7nY>

### Validation

Use words to show you understand how they feel. Examples:

- I get that this is hard for you.
- I can tell this feels scary for you.

### Encourage with confidence

Tell (and show) them you know they can do hard things. Examples:

- I know it's hard *and* I know you can do this!

### Ask questions

After facing fears to help their success sink in. Examples:

- What did you learn?
- How was that different from what you expected?

### Reward brave practice

Use rewards to motivate and celebrate facing fears. Examples:

- Screen time starts after daily practice.
- Today's practice is 5 points toward 100 point skateboard.

### Model

Use your own actions to show how to face fears even in the face of anxiety. Examples:

- I can face this fear with you the first time.
- I get nervous driving on this street. But I can do it.

Your ideas here:

# Session 7: For Parents & Caregivers

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## Manage your distress

It's hard to watch kids feel anxious! Try telling yourself: *They can do this. Avoiding what they fear isn't helping them in the long run.*

## Expect anxiety

Your child should feel anxious when facing fears. It's part of learning. Try telling yourself: *Anxious feelings are not harmful. These are part of learning*

## Build up

Start with a smaller, easier step if you're getting pushback or it's seeming too hard. Examples:

- You're not ready for the shot today. What's something else we can do that would be a brave step forward?

## Keep practicing

Daily practice facing fears is a great way to help kids build confidence. Examples:

- OK, come pick today's brave practice slip out of the basket. No peeking!

Your ideas here:



### Brainstorming brave practices demonstration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZMpOmzMotU>



### Brave practice demonstration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MXaABm5C10>



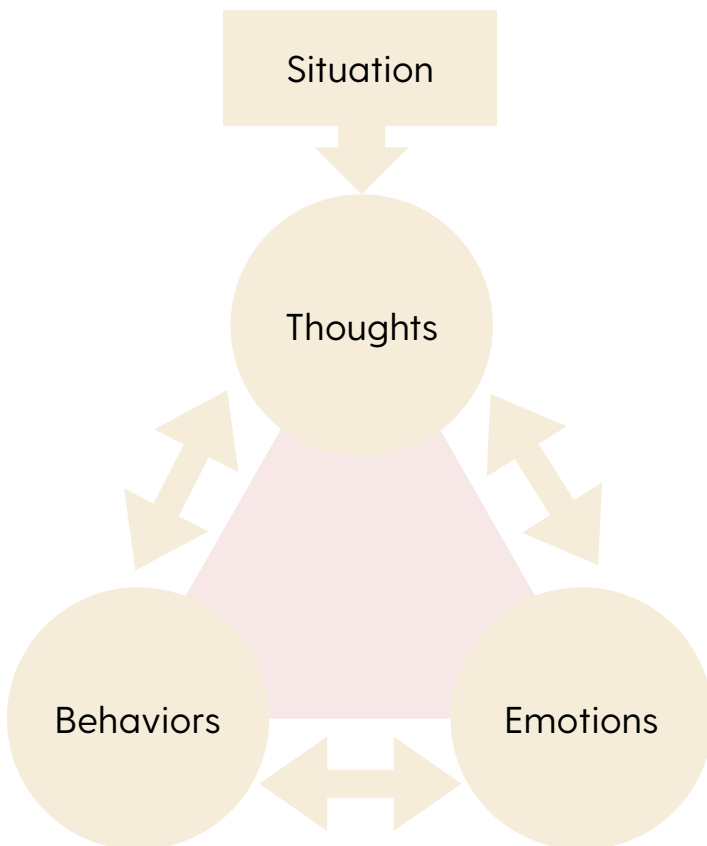
### Parent demonstration: Stopping accommodations for separation anxiety

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeSGcGUhE8>

# Session 7: Thinking Traps

## The cognitive triangle

The cognitive triangle shows how thoughts, emotions, and behaviors affect one another. This means changing your *thoughts* will change how you *feel* and *behave*.



A **situation** is anything that happens in your life, which triggers the cognitive triangle.

**Thoughts** are your interpretations of a situation. For example, if a stranger looks at you with an angry expression, you could think: “Oh no, what did I do wrong?” or “Maybe they are having a bad day.”

**Emotions** are feelings, such as happy, sad, angry or worries. Emotions can have physical components as well as mental, such as low energy when feeling sad or a stomachache when nervous.

**Behaviors** are your response to a situation. Behaviors include actions such as saying something or doing something (or, choosing not to do something).

Example:

- Hot thought: “I’m going to fail this test.”
- Feelings/emotions: anxiety, worry
- Actions/behaviors: avoid studying, procrastinate, over-prepare

What can you control: thoughts, feelings, or behaviors?

How can changing your hot thoughts change the emotions you feel and the actions you take?

*Continued on next page*

# Session 7: Thinking Traps

## Common thinking traps

- Catastrophizing (“It will be a disaster.”)
- Mind reading (“They’ll think I’m stupid.”)
- Black-and-white thinking (“If I’m not perfect, I’m a failure.”)
- Fortune telling (“I just know this will go badly.”)

## Detective thinking

Examine the evidence for and against your hot thought. Ask yourself:

- Do I know for sure this will happen?
- What are all of the possible things that could happen in this situation?
- What will probably happen?
- What has happened before in similar situations?
- After collecting the evidence, how likely is this to happen?
- What is the worst thing that could happen?
- Even if the event I’m worried about happens, can I help myself cope with it?
- What would be so bad about it? So what?

## Pro Tip



*You don’t have to answer every question on the list for each hot thought. You may only have to answer 1 - 2 questions to identify a thinking trap.*

## Coping thoughts

Once you have examined the evidence for and against your hot thought, it is helpful to come up with a coping thought. Coping thoughts are the opposite of hot thoughts; they are **true and helpful** thoughts that help us cope with a difficult situation or see the situation clearly. We can build on our coping thoughts after doing brave practice to remind ourselves what happened last time.

Examples:

- Trying is the most important thing.
- No one is perfect.
- Everyone makes mistakes.
- I will try my best.
- I’ve done it before, I can do it again.
- I will be proud of myself if I try.

*Continued on next page*

# Session 7: Thinking Traps

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**Coping thoughts examples, cont.**

- What is the worst that can happen?
- It's probably not as scary/bad as I think it is.
- That's just anxiety talking.
- This feeling is a normal body reaction and it will pass.
- This won't last forever.
- Thoughts are just thoughts; they are not necessarily true or factual.

Come up with your own coping thoughts:

# Session 7: Home Practice

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- 1) Pick a brave practice activity that makes you a bit more nervous (at least an 9 out of 10) and do it regularly. Use the next page to help you plan and keep track of your practices.
- 2) Catch a hot thought and practice detective thinking this week.

# Daily Brave Practice Worksheet

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Doing brave practice every day will help you overcome anxiety much quicker!

| Date ->                         | / | / | / | / | / | / | / |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What I will practice this week  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| My reward for practicing        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Highest anxiety rating (0 - 10) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| What did you learn?             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

# Session 8: Planning for the Future



**Keeping anxiety in check**

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=oKA3Li87gUY>

Make a plan below to keep anxiety problems from coming back later.

## Identify future trigger situations

Can you think of any events or situations that could cause your fears to come back?

Examples:

Someone who is anxious about school might feel more anxious after a holiday break

Someone who has overcome a phobia of dogs might feel more anxious after hearing about someone bitten by a dog.

## Make a plan to be brave

For any trigger situations you can think of, make a plan for how you can handle it. Is there extra precaution or practice that will help you feel more confident?

*Continued on the next page*

# Session 8: Planning for the Future

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## Remind yourself

What are some things you can tell yourself if you find you are getting too scared of normal situations in the future, or you feel stuck?

Remember...

- Break it down into manageable steps to move toward your goal, even when it feels scary!
- Use your support system. Ask for help when you need it.
- Reward yourself for a job well done!

What does living a brave lifestyle mean to you?

# Session 8: Home Practice

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- 1) Reward yourself for completing the group!
- 2) Don't forget to choose your next brave practice for the week.

Even though group is over, brave practice is not! **Brave practice is a skill you can use life long, and we hope you do!** You can do this with any false alarm where anxiety is getting in the way of the things you want to do.