



How to
control my anxious
thoughts?

HOW TO GET CONTROL OF YOUR ANXIOUS THOUGHTS?

What does an anxious thought mean?

The way we think and interpret everything that surrounds us or happens to us has a significant influence on our feelings and daily behavior. Therefore, when we feel anxious, it also alters how we feel and how we behave. Almost always our tendency is to see everything negatively, which can be exacerbated if we are having anxiety.

When feeling anxious, we tend to worry too much before something happens, we tend to expect the worst consequences of any situation, or we feel unable to cope with events. The funny thing about all this is that, most likely, we have no real basis for thinking this way.

If we change the way we think, everything else changes.

Example:

Disagreements with a co-worker

Person1	Person 2
Joseph disagrees with me. I'm sure he thinks that I'm a fool.	I see that we have different criteria. That seems positive to me.
I made a fool of myself. It would have been better not to talk. What will the others think of me?	I thought it was interesting that we addressed different ideas.
I feel too much discomfort in this situation. I'd better get out of here.	I think it is enriching for us to confront the the different points of view we have on this issue.



If we learn to become aware of negative and anxious thoughts, changing them for more encouraging ones, it may be difficult at first, but later it can be very advantageous.

How can we identify anxious and negative thoughts?

Sometimes it is difficult to identify this type of thoughts because they arise spontaneously and quickly and can become a habit. That is the reason why many people

cannot identify them. When we are in this state is what is called "cognitive distortions". However, this can be worked on, and favorable changes can be made over time.

How can you learn to control anxious thoughts?

1. Exaggeration of negative things

We enter what is called "cognitive distortion" when we think that something is worse than it really is. An example of this type of thinking is: "if I have another flu like this again, I will surely die".

Have you ever wondered if you have exaggerated a negative situation?

Think back over the last month and write down the events you have identified that you have exaggerated.

2. Generalizing

What is generalization?

We usually speak of generalization when we take an isolated situation generally. Example: "I can never tell you anything". If you have said something to someone and that person has ever resisted what you have said, this does not mean that you cannot say something to him or her again. You may even be able to identify what may have bothered them or how you said it, because it may not be what you said, but the way you may have expressed it.

Have you ever generalized?

Think about the last month and try to identify if you have made any generalizations.

3. All or nothing

Many times, we tend to go to the extreme when evaluating a situation. For example: "If I don't get it right this time, I'll never do it again in my life". Think about whether you have ever had these extreme thoughts. Write them down and determine why you think you thought to the extreme.

4. Taking everything personally

You may have an opinion about yourself or someone else that does not match reality. People who suffer from anxiety almost always believe that others judge them harshly. Example: "if they're looking at me like that it's because I must look awful".

Do you think you have ever taken it personally when it may have had little to do with you?

Think of events of this type that have occurred in the last three weeks.

How can we change the way we think?

You have probably fallen into some of these thoughts at various times in your life. However, as we have said before, although it may be difficult at first, over time you can learn to think more realistically, and this will improve your life considerably.



Some suggestions for you to work on this goal are as follows:

- When you identify any anxious, fearful, negative thoughts, write them down as quickly as you can. It may be difficult for you to identify them all, but when you feel discomfort ask yourself the question, "What did I think before I felt this way?" Then, you can ask yourself the following question to confirm if what you thought has to do with reality:
 - Ask for the judgment of someone you trust to see if, from the outside, they see something different or see the situation the same way you do.
 - You can ask yourself if everyone around you would also feel the same way about the situation that makes you feel anxious.
 - Ask yourself if what you believe about that situation applies to all situations.
 - Think about other similar events that have occurred.

- Try to explore causes other than the one you have determined that gave rise to the situation that makes you anxious.

- Ask yourself if it is possible that you are also making a mistake in interpreting the situation the way you are doing.

- You can choose to change these anxious thoughts to ones that are calming and more realistic.
For example:

Given the following situation, try to look for solutions. You can do the same, as a practice, with as many situations as you can imagine.

I FEEL ANXIOUS (A) IN THIS MEETING AT MY WORKPLACE.

Anxious thoughts:

- They are sensing that I am nervous.
- They must be thinking that I am a fool and ridiculous.
- I'm probably useless to my boss and worthless.

Resulting feeling: Fear

How do I balance with more reassuring thoughts?

- They are unlikely to be noticing my nervousness.
- I know what I'm feeling, but they don't know it.
- It's totally normal to feel uneasy and nervous in a meeting of high importance.
- I will try to concentrate on what is being discussed in the meeting.

Result: you can handle the anxiety

Even if you don't believe much in the positive thoughts you can generate, it is important for you to know that, by making this a constant practice, you can make the fear and self-criticism that you do to yourself disappear or be minimized over time.

You can practice this in the following way:

Write down an event that has made you feel anxious, the negative thoughts you have had and the feelings that generated these thoughts.

Remember that the important thing is to modify what we think, and thus we will be changing what we feel. We cannot work directly on anxiety; we must first modify the thoughts that condition it. If we do this, we will be able to modify the emotional responses to every circumstance in which we have not been able to handle the anxiety!