

Common Grace Remedies for Anxiety

Are there psychological and medical therapies for anxiety that are helpful for both Christians and non-Christians? Is medication helpful? Can we call these “common grace remedies” gifts from God to a hurting world?

Richard Winter is Professor Emeritus of Practical Theology and Counselling at Covenant Theological Seminary in St Louis, USA. He is also a psychotherapist and counsellor who was trained in medicine and psychiatry in England before being on the staff and a director of the English branch of the L’Abri Fellowship for 14 years. He is the author of books on boredom, depression, perfectionism, and reproductive technologies. He is married, with four children and eight grandchildren.

- I. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
 - A. Activating Event
 - B. Belief
 - C. Consequences
 - D. Disputation
(Overestimation of danger v. underestimation of resources)

- II. Panic Attacks
 - A. Hear story and retell back to them
 - B. Rapport and empathy
 - C. Medical examination to rule out physical cause
 - D. Identify theme – trapped, out of control, shame, terror...
 - E. Identify avoidance
 - F. Create symptoms – hyperventilation
 - G. Not going to die!
 - H. Go towards what you are afraid of
 - I. Small doses – learn to tolerate it
 - J. Take control – don’t be victim

- III. Anxieties/Phobias
 - A. Expect it. Befriend it. What telling you? Part of life!
 - B. Externalize it and talk back – bored, humor...
 - C. Amygdala alarm: “Oh no” thoughts
 - D. Resist all or nothing thinking
 - E. Learn to handle/face rather than avoid
 - F. Parents have to learn to stay calm
 - G. Homework: What I know and what I don’t know. Learning to be OK with uncertainty. Rigidity to flexibility
 - H. I don’t like it but I can handle it
 - I. Deeper meaning of fear
 - J. Social anxiety: Increase confidence to cope (Role play)

- IV. Anxiety Management (Margaret Wehrenberg)
 - A. Explain amygdala alarm
 - B. Avoid CATS
 - C. Mindfulness awareness training

- D. Pot/Basket
 - E. Journaling, drawing, painting...
 - F. Focus on one anxiety – where in body?
 - G. Diaphragmatic breathing. Exhalation long. Add sound.
 - H. Progressive muscle relaxation
 - I. Exercise, laughter, and fun
 - J. Identify other linked emotions (anger, grief)
 - K. Thought stopping and replacement
 - L. Rut/path, skin abrasion pictures
 - M. Worry well and only once if nothing can be done
 - N. Plan instead of worrying – steps and timeline
 - O. Don't re-plan plan
 - P. Work against repetitive thinking and catastrophizing
 - Q. Generate 2 positive thoughts a day
 - R. PERSISTENCE
- V. OCD
- A. Reframe
 - B. Reattribute
 - C. Develop new path
 - D. Medication
- VI. Dealing with Resistance
- A. Clarify goals
 - B. Cost benefit analysis
 - C. Voice of change v voice of resistance
- VII. Exercise
- VIII. Sleep – cultivate healthy routines
- IX. Change body to change brain
- X. Gratitude
- XI. People and animals
- XII. Counselling and Medication

Suggested Readings:

When Life Goes Dark: Finding Hope in the midst of Depression Chapter 8 on Anxiety, Richard Winter, IVP 2012

Brain Block: Free Yourself from Obsessive Compulsive Behavior. Jeffrey Schwartz, MD