

Working With Your Anxiety, Not Against It

Letting it do what it's meant to do

Anxiety has a useful purpose. It gives us the focus and energy to spot risks and prepare for the future.

But past experiences can put anxiety into overdrive, making things feel more threatening than they really are. When we're very anxious, it can be hard to tell the difference between **helpful thinking** that prepares us, and **going round in circles** because of old fears.

This worksheet helps you tell the two apart, and gives you a next step either way.

How to use this worksheet

- 1 Write down the anxious thought.**
Just as it shows up in your head. No need to make it sound reasonable.
- 2 Ask: is this within my control?**
Tick one: ☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No
- 3 If ☐ Yes or ☐ Partly , find one action.**
Yes: what's the first small step of a plan?
Partly: what could make it less likely to happen?
No: skip this step. That's okay.
- 4 Picture the worst case and the best case.**
Write both down. Then put an X on the line to show where things will *most likely* land. Usually it's somewhere in between.
- 5 Everyone: soften the worst case, and boost the best case.**
If the worst did happen, what would help you cope, recover or learn from it?
And what can you do, or what in general makes the best case possible?

Go gently. There are no wrong answers. You can use one sheet per thought, or come back to it later.

Examples

Here's how three different thoughts might look. One for each answer.

1 ANXIOUS THOUGHT

"I won't have time to do the course."

Is this within my control? ☒ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No

Yes → First step of a plan

Drop some less important things from my schedule.

Worst case

It will feel like too much and I'll want to quit.

Best case

I'll manage everything perfectly.



What could soften the worst case?

I can ask for extensions on some of the work. I can ask others for help.

What can I do, or what in general makes the best case possible?

Plan my week every Sunday and block out set study time.

2 ANXIOUS THOUGHT

"I can't handle the programme. I'll be overwhelmed."

Is this within my control? ☐ Yes ☒ Partly ☐ No

Partly → What could make it less likely?

Find a programme that's near home.

Worst case

I'll get overwhelmed and quit.

Best case

I'll complete the programme.



What could soften the worst case?

I can learn from what worked for me and what didn't, and show myself compassion.

What can I do, or what in general makes the best case possible?

Take it one module at a time and check in with my tutor early on.

3 ANXIOUS THOUGHT

"People on the course will judge me."

Is this within my control? ☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☒ No → skip straight to worst / best case

Worst case

They will reject me.

Best case

They will like me.



What could soften the worst case?

I can explain that I'm neurodivergent and sometimes find groups hard.

What can I do, or what in general makes the best case possible?

Most people on a course are nervous too and hoping to make friends. I've connected with people in new groups before.

1 MY ANXIOUS THOUGHT

2 Is this within my control? ☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No *If no, skip to step 4*

3 ONE ACTION

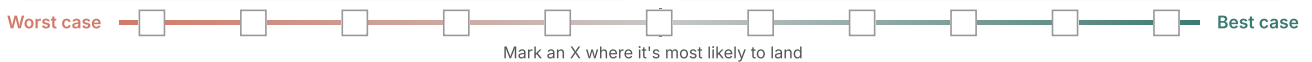
Yes → First step of a plan

Partly → What could make it less likely?

4 WORST CASE & BEST CASE

Worst case

Best case



5 SOFTEN THE WORST & BOOST THE BEST

What could soften the worst case?

What can I do, or what in general makes the best case possible?

1 MY ANXIOUS THOUGHT

2 Is this within my control? ☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No *If no, skip to step 4*

3 ONE ACTION

Yes → First step of a plan

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3 ONE ACTION

Yes → First step of a plan

Partly → What could make it less likely?

4 WORST CASE & BEST CASE

Worst case

Best case

Worst case  Best case
Mark an X where it's most likely to land

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What could soften the worst case?

What can I do, or what in general makes the best case possible?

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