

# Coping *with* Anxiety *workbook*

**Facilitator Reproducible  
Guided Self-Exploration  
Activities**

**Ester A. Leutenberg  
& John J. Liptak, Ed.D.**

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### **Coping with Anxiety Workbook**

Facilitator Reproducible Guided Self-Exploration Activities

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# Using This Book

Anxiety is becoming increasingly prevalent in our modern society. Research indicates that the number of people suffering from anxiety disorders continues to increase and this increase in anxiety disorders can be tied to several societal trends:

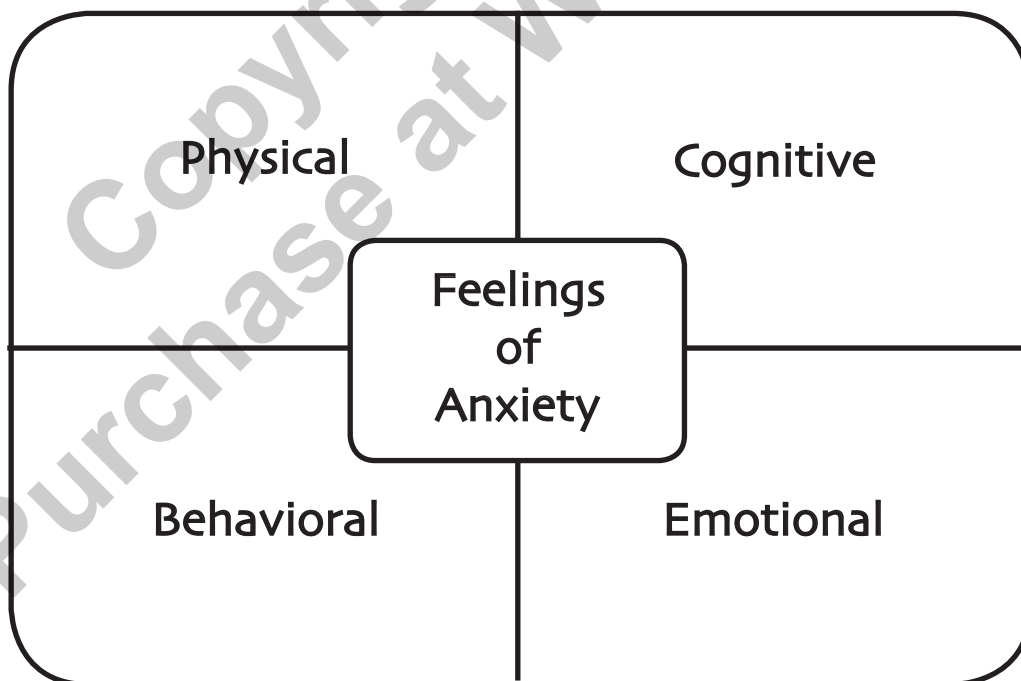
- The pace of modern life has increased dramatically in recent decades, and research suggests that this pace will continue to increase. People feel the need to increase the pace at which they do things compared with past generations. Most people live their lives in a constant state of doing rather than simply being. Because of this, many people deprive themselves of appropriate sleep and rest, and they eat foods that do not contain the appropriate nutrients necessary for their good health.
- Along with the rapid pace of life, people are exposed to monumental technological, social, occupational and environmental changes. This rate of change is so overpowering that many people do not feel they have time to adjust and assimilate the changes into their lives; thus they face increasing anxiety each day.
- People lack agreement on a set of social values and standards that results in uncertainty about how to live life. Because of an increase in divergent worldviews, globalization and standards portrayed by the media, people are forced to create their own meanings in life and develop their own set of moral values by which to live. When people are unable to find meaning in their lives, they usually turn to less socially acceptable methods for making meaning. This lack of meaning leaves people feeling anxious.
- People often feel less connected than previous generations. When people feel less connected to themselves, their family, others in the community, or even a higher power, they feel disconnected and alienated. This alienation leads people to perceive threats to their well-being and security.
- The way that people work has changed dramatically. Many people have been downsized as corporations attempt to operate on tighter budgets and move operations to countries where the cost of labor is less expensive and the people who are able to hold onto their jobs feel anxious about their job-security. People then feel competitive, with the need to work even harder and longer to maintain their current positions.

There are many trends and forces at work that contribute to feelings of fear and anxiety in people. Fear and anxiety are experiences that are familiar to everyone, but many people often have a serious problem with anxiety at some point in their lives. This book provides assessments and self-guided activities to help people learn effective skills for coping with all forms of anxiety. A variety of self-exploration activities are provided for you to determine which best suit the unique needs of your participants.

## Information About Anxiety

Anxiety is a complex, multifaceted experience which contains a combination of different, yet interrelated elements. Anxiety affects us:

- **PHYSICAL:** Anxiety causes a variety of somatic symptoms such as dry mouth, chest pains, lump in throat, temperature change, loss of appetite, headaches, irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, perspiring, etc.
- **COGNITIVE:** Anxiety is sparked through patterns of distorted thinking. Some of these distorted thought patterns include negative and fearful self-talk, catastrophic thinking, overgeneralization of outcomes based on a single event, and all-or-nothing thinking.
- **EMOTIONAL:** Anxiety is a strong, overwhelming feeling which, in turn, leads to other feelings such as fear, sadness and helplessness.
- **BEHAVIORAL:** Anxiety affects what people do and how they live their lives. Anxiety is effective when it is used to promote evasive action in the threat of danger. The problem arises, however, when peoples' appraisals are out of proportion to a "true" threat and evasive actions are both unnecessary and unhelpful.



## What Is and Is Not Anxiety?

It is important for you as the facilitator to know the differences between anxiety and anxiety disorders. Facilitators can help their participants by reminding them of these facts:

1. **Everyone experiences anxiety.** Everyone has feelings of anxiety in daily life. It is important and life-changing to be able to cope with anxiety and manage it effectively.
2. **Anxiety is normal.** In many situations it is appropriate to act with some anxiety. A lack of feelings of anxiety in certain situations would not be normal. For example, a person who felt some anxiety after being fired would be exhibiting a normal, ordinary reaction. However, when this anxiety becomes so intense that it affects the person's work, relationships and/or whole life, the person is experiencing an unusual amount of anxiety.
3. **Anxiety is a reaction.** This reaction can be managed effectively. By completing the activities and exercises included in this workbook, people will be able to make their lives less anxiety-filled, regardless of the nature and intensity of difficult situations.
4. **Anxiety has many roots.** There is no one cause of anxiety. Anxiety can be caused by a biological or physiological imbalance in the brain, heredity, parenting, early trauma, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect, recreational drug use, etc.

People experience a variety of anxiety reactions:

- **Situational Anxiety** – This occurs when you worry in the present about an everyday situation like going to the dentist or being in a large group.
- **Fear** – This occurs when you are afraid of an external object or situation that you face such as failing an employee evaluation or being rejected by another person.
- **Phobia** – This is an irrational fear in which you persistently begin to avoid an object or a situation like continuing to take the steps rather than riding in an elevator.
- **Anticipatory Anxiety** – This occurs when you are anxious about something that might occur in the future such as anxiety about an upcoming doctor's appointment. This type of anxiety can quickly turn into a panic attack.
- **Anxiety Disorders** – These disorders occur when normal anxiety becomes more intense than usual, lasts longer than usual (may persist for months), and leads to phobias that detract from life. A client who appears to suffer from an anxiety disorder should be advised to consult a medical or psychiatric professional immediately.

# Format of Book

The *Coping with Anxiety Workbook* contains assessments and guided self-exploration activities that can be used with a variety of populations to help participants cope more effectively with the various forms of anxiety. Each chapter of this workbook begins with an annotated Table of Contents with notes and examples for the facilitator. Each chapter contains two primary elements: 1) A set of assessments to help participants gather information about themselves in a focused situation, and 2) a set of guided self-exploration activities to help participants process information and learn more effective ways of behaving to cope with anxiety in their lives.

## Assessments

Each chapter begins with an assessment that provides participants with valuable information about themselves. These assessments can enhance recognition of effective and ineffective patterns of behavior, identify life skills which are productive and unproductive, and enrich participants' understanding of how they interact with the world. Assessments provide a path to self-discovery through the participants' exploration of their own unique traits and behaviors. The purpose of these assessments is not to "pigeon-hole" people, but to allow them to explore various elements that are critical for coping with anxiety. This book contains *self-assessments* and not *tests*. Traditional tests measure knowledge or right or wrong responses. For the assessments provided in this book, remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers. These assessments ask only for opinions or attitudes about topics related to a variety of coping skills and abilities.

The assessments in this book are based on self-reported data. In other words, the accuracy and usefulness of the information is dependent on the information that participants honestly provide about themselves. All of the assessments in this workbook are designed to be administered, scored, and interpreted by the participants as a starting point for them to begin to learn more about themselves and their coping skills. Remind participants that the assessments are exploratory exercises and not a final determination of abilities. Lastly, the assessments are not a substitute for professional assistance. If you feel any of your participants need more assistance than you can provide, please refer them to an appropriate professional.

**As your participants begin the assessments in this workbook give these instructions:**

- Take your time. Because there is no time limit for completing the assessments, work at your own pace. Allow yourself time to reflect on your results and how they compare to what you already know about yourself.
- Do not answer the assessments as you think others would like you to answer them or how you think others see you. Remember that these assessments are for you to reflect on your life and explore some of the barriers that are keeping you from living a calmer, more rational and less anxious life.

### Format of Book *(Continued)*

- Assessments are powerful tools if you are honest with yourself. Take your time and be truthful in your responses so that your results are an honest reflection of you. Your level of commitment in completing the assessments honestly will determine how much you learn about yourself.
- Before completing each assessment, be sure to read the instructions. The assessments have similar formats, but they have different scales, responses, scoring instructions and methods for interpretation.
- Finally, remember that learning about yourself should be a positive and motivating experience. Don't stress about taking the assessments or finding out about your results. Just respond honestly and learn as much about yourself as you can.

### Guided Self-Exploration Activities

Guided self-exploration activities are any exercises that assist participants in self-reflection and enhance self-knowledge, identify potential ineffective behaviors, and teach more effective ways of coping. Guided self-exploration is designed to help participants make a series of discoveries that lead to increased social and emotional competencies, as well as to serve as an energizing way to help participants grow personally and professionally. They are brief, easy-to-use self-reflection tools designed to promote insight and self-growth. Many different types of guided self-exploration activities are provided for you to pick and chose the activities most needed by your participants and/or will be most appealing to them. The unique features of self-guided exploration activities make them usable and appropriate for a variety of individual sessions and group sessions.

### Features of Guided Self-Exploration Activities

- **Quick, easy and rewarding to use** – These guided self-exploration activities are designed to be an efficient, appealing method for motivating participants to explore information about themselves - including their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors - in a relatively short period of time.
- **Reproducible** – Because the guided self-exploration activities can be reproduced by the facilitator, no more than the one book needs to be purchased. You may photocopy as many items as you wish for your participants. If you want to add or delete words on a page, make one photocopy, white out and/or write your own words, and then make photocopies from your personalized master.
- **Participative** – These guided self-exploration activities help people to quickly focus their attention, aid them in the self-reflection process, and learn new and more effective ways of coping.

### Format of Book *(Continued)*

- **Motivating to complete** – The guided self-exploration activities are designed to be an energizing way for participants to engage in self-reflection and learn about themselves. Various activities are included to enhance the learning process related to developing important social and emotional competency skills.
- **Low risk** – The guided self-exploration activities are designed to be less risky than formal assessments and structured exercises. They are user-friendly, and participants will generally feel rewarded and motivated after completing these activities.
- **Adaptable to a variety of populations** – The guided self-exploration activities can be used with many different populations, and they can be tailored to meet the needs of the specific population with whom you work.
- **Focused** – Each guided self-exploration activity is designed to focus on a single coping issue, thus enhancing the experience for participants.
- **Flexible** – The guided self-exploration activities are flexible and can be used independently, or to supplement other types of interventions.



## Chapter Elements

*The Coping with Anxiety Workbook* is designed to be used either independently or as part of an integrated curriculum. You may administer any of the assessments and the guided self-exploration activities to an individual or a group with whom you are working, or you may administer any of the activities over one or more days. Feel free to pick and choose those assessments and activities that best fit the outcomes you desire.

**The first page of each chapter begins with an annotated Table of Contents with notes and examples for the facilitator.**

**Assessments** – Assessments with scoring directions and interpretation materials begin each chapter. The authors recommend that you begin presenting each topic by asking participants to complete the assessment. Facilitators can choose one or more, or all of the activities relevant to their participants' specific needs and concerns.

**Guided Self-Exploration Activities** – Practical questions and activities to prompt self-reflection and promote self-understanding are included after each of the assessments. These questions and activities foster introspection and promote pro-social behaviors and coping skills. The activities in this workbook are tied to the assessments so that you can identify and select activities quickly and easily.

The activities are divided into four chapters to help you identify and select assessments easily and quickly:

**Chapter 1: Anxiety Triggers**

This chapter helps participants identify and learn to recognize their anxiety triggers.

**Chapter 2: Fear Factor**

This chapter helps participants identify and explore the intensity of their fears in life.

**Chapter 3: Anxiety Symptoms**

This chapter helps participants identify and explore how they experience symptoms of anxiety.

**Chapter 4: Coping With My Anxiety**

This chapter helps participants understand how effectively they are preventing and then coping with anxiety in life.

***Thanks to . . .***

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Jay Leutenberg

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# Anxiety Triggers

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| <i>Explain to participants that triggers are environmental situations or events that initiate cognitions or emotions.</i>  |       |
| <b>Movie or Television Characters.</b> . . . . .   | 21    |
| <i>Distribute several copies to participants who have more characters to write about. Examples of characters might include George Costanza on Seinfeld, who is always worried that he has some rare disease, or Adrian Monk on Monk, who has anxieties and phobias about everything from milk to speaking in public.</i> |       |
| <b>Anxiety Poetry</b> . . . . .  | 22    |
| <i>Haiku is suggested, but participants do not need to focus on the haiku style. Participants can use any poem structure.</i>  |       |
| <b>What's the Worst that Could Happen?</b> . . . . .   | 23    |
| <i>This activity is designed to help participants realize that often, what they believe to be the worst that can happen is not always that bad at all.</i>   |       |
| <b>The Crystal Ball</b> . . . . .  | 24    |
| <i>Bring a ball to the group and ask participants to imagine this being the crystal ball.</i>  |       |
| <b>I Want to Make a Change</b> . . . . .   | 25    |
| <i>The list is not representative of all populations. Encourage participants to use the blank lines for the things they need to change.</i>  |       |
| <b>A Change in My Life</b> . . . . .   | 26    |
| <b>Other Applicable Quotations</b>   |       |
| <i>The key to change ... is to let go of fear. ~ Rosanne Cash</i>  |       |
| <i>Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending. ~ Maria Robinson</i>  |       |
| <i>Sometimes it's the smallest decisions that can change your life forever. ~ Keri Russell</i>   |       |

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*You Might Need to Make a Change*

*What do you want to change?*

*Ex: I am considering retirement next year.*

*What Might Your Decision Be?*

*Ex: I decided to retire and spend more time with my family, friends, and hobbies.*

**The Serenity Prayer . . . . . 28**

*Ex: The things I cannot change: I lost my job*

*Courage to change the things I can: My attitude*

**My Change Cartoon Strip . . . . . 29**

*Process with the participants the last two questions on the worksheet.*

**Today's Worry . . . . . 30**

*Ex: My father, Jim. He's having surgery today and I can't be there with him*

**Situations I Usually Worry About . . . . . 31**

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>RELATIONSHIPS:</b><br/><i>My son seems depressed and he will not seek help.</i></p> | <p><i>He won't get better and be able to live a fruitful life.</i></p> | <p><i>Talk to a friend of his to see if she can convince my son to find someone to talk with.</i></p> |
|---|--|---|

**The Worry Pie . . . . . 32**

*Have some crayons, markers or color pencils available to brighten up the pie!*

**Doodling . . . . . 33**

*Before beginning the session, ask for a volunteer to come up and give some more examples of doodling on a board or flip chart.*

**Letting Go of My Worries . . . . . 34**

*If time and outdoors is available, take group outside with helium-filled balloons. Ask them write a worry on each of the balloons with a marker. Tell them to let one go at a time, and watch that worry disappear from sight. If this is not feasible, use it as a visualization exercise.*

## Anxiety Triggers Scale Introduction

Anxiety is becoming an inevitable and increasingly prevalent part of our society.

As the pace of society increases, people must cope with changes in their social, environmental, corporate, and technological environments. It is important to realize that many situations in which it is appropriate to react anxiously arise in everyday life. However, some situations are not direct threats, but people still react anxiously.

The purpose of this assessment is to help you identify how much anxiety you are experiencing and what tends to trigger your anxiety. For each of the sections that follow, read each of the statements and decide if the statement applies to you always, sometimes or never. If it is *always* true for you, circle the number 3 next to the statement. If it is *sometimes* true for you, circle the number 2 next to the statement. If it is *never* true for you, circle the number 1, next to the statement. Complete all of the items before going back to score this scale.

In the following example, the circled 1 indicates that the item is never true for the participant completing the assessment:

|                          | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|--------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| I get anxious when . . . |        |           |       |
| I take a test            | 3      | 2         | 1     |

This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.  
Do not spend too much time thinking about your answers.  
Your initial response will be the most true for you.  
Be sure to respond to every statement.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Turn to the next page and begin.*

## Anxiety Triggers

### Scale: Anxiety Triggers

|   | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|---|--------|-----------|-------|
| I get anxious when . . .  |        |           |       |
| I take a test . . . . .   | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I find myself in an uncomfortable conversation . . . . .          | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I interview for a job . . . . .                                   | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I go to a party or social event . . . . .                         | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I meet a new person. . . . .                                      | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I go on a date or have a meeting with someone new . . . . .       | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I am around children. . . . .                                     | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I talk on the phone to a customer service representative. . . . . | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I go to the store . . . . .                                       | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I am about to be evaluated at work . . . . .                      | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I have to speak or perform in public . . . . .                    | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I go to the dentist or doctor. . . . .                            | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I am surrounded by prejudiced people. . . . .                     | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I am going to be late . . . . .                                   | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I am unable to do something perfectly. . . . .                    | 3      | 2         | 1     |

A - TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_

*(Continued on the next page)*



## Scale: Anxiety Triggers *(Continued)*

|  | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|--|--------|-----------|-------|
| <b>I get anxious when I think about . . .</b>                  |        |           |       |
| caring for an aging family member . . . . .                    | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| being downsized or fired from my job . . . . .                 | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| keeping up with current technology . . . . .                   | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| something different happening at work . . . . .                | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| a change in my family situation . . . . .                      | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| a personal health issue . . . . .                              | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| problems with members of my family . . . . .                   | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| moving from my residence to another . . . . .                  | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| new thoughts about my religion or spiritual beliefs . . . . .  | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| beginning or finishing an education training program . . . . . | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| financial issues . . . . .                                     | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| the health problem of a family member . . . . .                | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| my marital status . . . . .                                    | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| future retirement plans . . . . .                              | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| my relationship issues . . . . .                               | 3      | 2         | 1     |

C - TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_

*(Continued on the next page)*

# Anxiety Triggers

## Scale: Anxiety Triggers *(Continued)*

|   | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|---|--------|-----------|-------|
| When I worry . . .  |        |           |       |
| I have irrational thoughts . . . . .                      | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I avoid the situation or object I fear . . . . .          | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I feel powerless . . . . .                                | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I have trouble relaxing . . . . .                         | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| it is usually about small, insignificant things . . . . . | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| it is often about things I have no control over . . . . . | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| it gets in my way at work . . . . .                       | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| I can't function effectively . . . . .                    | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| it influences my dreams . . . . .                         | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| it affects my sleep . . . . .                             | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| it becomes so intense I feel panicky . . . . .            | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| it interferes with my normal routine . . . . .            | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| it creates problems for me at work . . . . .              | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| it affects my relationships . . . . .                     | 3      | 2         | 1     |
| it creates stress and anxiety for me . . . . .            | 3      | 2         | 1     |

W - TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_

GO TO THE SCORING DIRECTIONS

# Anxiety Triggers Scale

## Scoring Directions

The Anxiety Triggers Scale is designed to help you to identify the primary triggers for your feelings of anxiety.

### Scoring the Anxiety Triggers Scale:

Look at the items you just completed. Add the numbers you've circled for each of the three sections (A, C, and W) on the previous pages. Put that total on the line marked TOTAL at the end of each section.

Transfer your totals for each of the three sections to the lines below:

**SCALE A: Anxieties Total** = \_\_\_\_\_

**SCALE C: Changes Total** = \_\_\_\_\_

**SCALE W: Worries Total** = \_\_\_\_\_

The Profile Interpretation section that follows will help you understand your scores.

### Profile Interpretation

| Individual Scale Score | Result   | Indications  |
|------------------------|----------|--|
| 15 to 24               | low      | If you scored in the Low range on any of the scales, you do not experience very much anxiety due to these anxiety-producing situations or objects. |
| 25 to 35               | moderate | If you scored in the Moderate range on any of the scales, you experience some anxiety due to these anxiety-producing situations or objects.        |
| 36 to 45               | high     | If you scored in the High range on any of the scales, you experience a great deal of anxiety due to these anxiety-producing situations or objects. |

# What Triggers Your Anxiety?

We all become anxious about different situations.  
What triggers your anxiety?

## 1) Increases in physical or mental stress

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changes at work                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completing an educational goal    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in finances               | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change in personal health         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change in health of someone close | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

## 2) Relationship Issues

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce / Separation / Split up | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arguments                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family, in-laws                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends and neighbors           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

## 3) Anxiety-provoking events

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Death of someone close        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor performance              | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal injury / Poor health | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial problems            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking in public            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of a job                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

**Being aware of what triggers our anxieties is the first step in managing them.**

# Movie and/or Television Characters

Think about two of your favorite movie or television characters. Do any of them have anxieties? What are they? How do they deal with them?



Movie or Television Character \_\_\_\_\_

What movie or television show? \_\_\_\_\_

What are his or her anxieties? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How does this character deal with these anxieties? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you think they managed their anxiety effectively or ineffectively? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_

Movie or Television Character \_\_\_\_\_

What movie or television show? \_\_\_\_\_

What are his or her anxieties? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How does this character deal with these anxieties? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you think they managed their anxiety effectively or ineffectively? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_