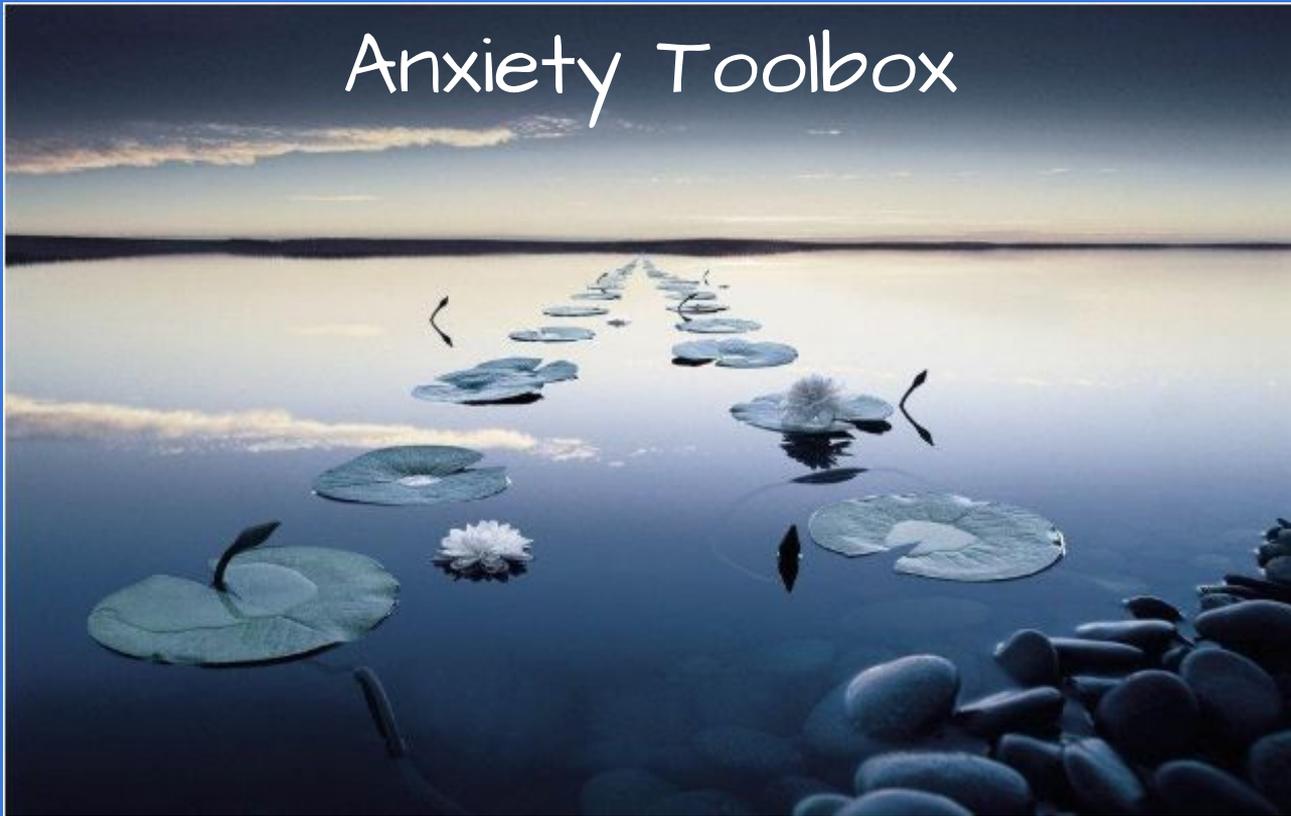


# Anxiety Toolbox



**Presented by CSUEB Counseling Services  
Week 6 - Perception and Panic**



# Let's Stretch . . .



# A Few Zoom Guidelines

- Please mute your audio and type any questions into the chat box
- Your video can be off or on, whatever makes you most comfortable
- Confidentiality, and Zoom limitations

# Community Agreements

- Push yourself to participate
- Focus on your own experience
- Share headlines, not details
- Ask others before giving them feedback
- Step forward, step back
- Assume positive intent from others
- Take responsibility for your needs

# Introductions:

Share your name, year @ CSUEB, major  
& favorite activity to relax



# Intentions for today's Group:

- 3-Minute Breathing Space Meditation
- Perception & Panic
- Hyperventilation Syndrome
- Panic: Medical Realities and Common Fears
- What is grounding?
- 5-4-3-2-1

# ***My Anxiety Meter***

# 3-Minute Breathing Space Meditation



# Perception & Panic

When having a panic attack, many people believe they can't breathe or are having a heart attack. This fear is understandable given the powerful symptoms stress hormones can temporarily create.

The American Psychiatric Association defines a panic attack as, ***“an abrupt surge of intense fear or intense discomfort that reaches a peak within minutes,*** and during which specific symptoms occur.

Understanding panic empowers you to catch misinterpretations, and see what is actually happening more clearly. Despite being very scary and uncomfortable, panic is not a threat to your life or sanity. If you've been experiencing panic attacks, we recommend a medical evaluation to ensure there are no related medical conditions.

# Common Symptoms of Panic

- Accelerated heart rate
- Sweating
- Shaking
- Shortness of breath or choking
- Chest pain or pressure
- Nausea or stomach distress
- Feeling dizzy, faint or light-headed
- Chills or hot sensations
- Numbness or tingling
- Derealization (feeling unreality)
- Depersonalization (feeling detached from yourself)



- Fear of losing control or “going crazy”
- Fear of dying

**Question:** What changes have you noticed when you’ve experienced panic?

# Hyperventilation Syndrome

When breathing becomes very imbalanced, people often feel anxious and have symptoms similar to a panic attack, such as: rapid heart rate, shortness of breath, trembling, tingling or numbness, and lightheadedness (to name a few).

This isn't a medical problem; it's a breathing problem called hyperventilation syndrome. The problem with hyperventilation is that it feels like your body is not getting enough oxygen when it actually has too much! Hyperventilation causes an imbalance of carbon dioxide in the blood that can create symptoms similar to panic.

There are easy and effective tools for coping with over-breathing, such as diaphragmatic breathing and helpful self-talk. When you start to over-breathe...

# Common Fears vs. Medical Realities of Panic

## **Common Fear 1: “I’m going to have a heart attack.”**

Medical Reality: Having extremely rapid heart rate with a panic attack can be really scary, but it’s not dangerous. A healthy heart can beat up to 200 times a minute for hours, even. days, without being damaged. A panic attack does not deprive the heart of oxygen. Your heart rate will begin to slow as you calm down. Remind yourself, “I am safe, and my heart will be fine.”

## **Common Fear 2 “I can’t breathe; I am going to suffocate.”**

Medical Reality: Under stress, muscles tighten and your breathing will become more constricted and shallow. This is part of the stress response, and a built-in reflex that will actually force you. to breathe if you are not getting enough oxygen. Your body will not let you suffocate. To gain relief, change how you interpret the stress response, and learn to practice diaphragmatic breathing.

# Common Fears vs. Medical Realities of Panic (cont...)

## **Common Fear 3: “I think I am going to faint.”**

Medical Reality: Feeling light-headed while panicking sometimes occurs, and this is most often due to breathing too much oxygen very rapidly (i.e. hyperventilating). It is unlikely that you will actually faint. Sit or lay down if needed. By tensing your muscles, you can also increase blood pressure, and as a result, oxygen to your brain. Practice breathing deeply and slowly and notice the sensations subside.

## **Common Fear 4: “I am about to go crazy!” or “I’m about to completely lose it”**

Medical Reality: The rapid breathing that often accompanies panic can sometimes be disorienting and may result in a feeling of “unreality.” Fortunately, people do not “go crazy” in a sudden or spontaneous way. Mental disorders that include psychosis (e.g., schizophrenia) develop gradually and do not rise from panic attacks. You cannot “go crazy” from a panic attack. Tell yourself, “This is just a symptom of anxiety, and these sensations will pass as I calm down.”

# What is “Grounding”?

**Grounding techniques** can help you disconnect from intense emotional pain in a healthy way, by: connecting with your environment, through your 5 senses, in the moment. By focusing on the external world, you can feel less swept away by panic, worry, or sadness and become more centered, stable, and “grounded.”

**Grounding skills** give you the option and ability to “anchor” yourself to the present when being swept away with emotional pain or fear, or disconnected from yourself or the world. Grounding can be done **anywhere, anytime!**

**EXERCISE: Grounding through the 5 Senses**

**HEARING > TOUCH > VISION > TASTE > SMELL**



# ***My Anxiety Meter***

# Additional Resources

- Counseling Groups throughout every week
- Virtual RAW events: eSports, Virtual 5K, Mindful Minutes Mondays 9:30am
- Pioneers for HOPE - support with food and housing
- Follow us on Instagram - @eastbayshcs

# Take care!

- Thank you for joining us!
- Think about what skills you might want to practice from home this week:
  - 3 minute breathing space
  - Grounding Techniques
- Continue practicing breathing and mindfulness techniques if you have found these to be helpful!

