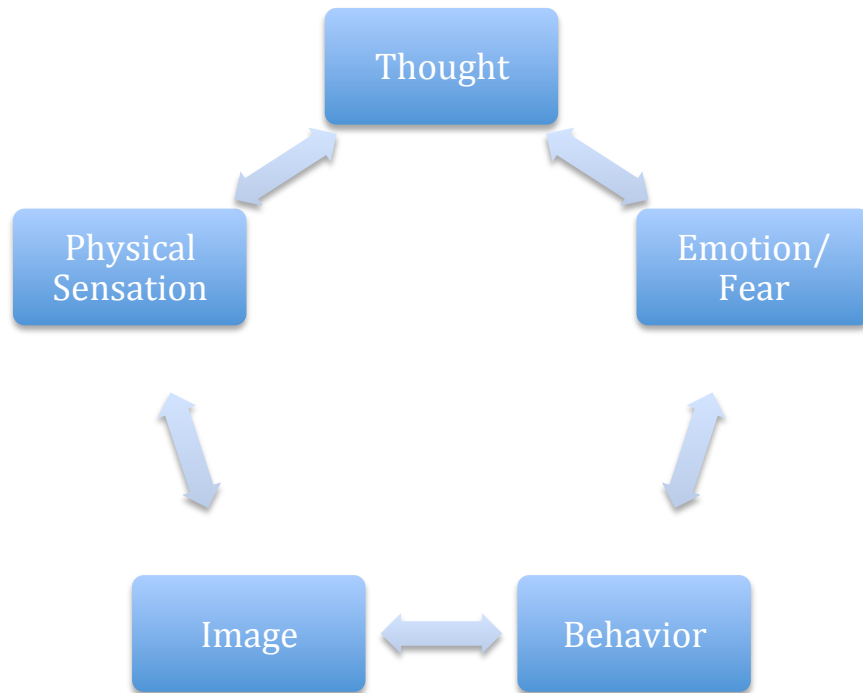


Change Your Mind - Body Response from Anxiety and Panic to Calm Focus

The Panic Spiral



Nip anxiety in the bud – Why? If you catch anxiety when it's at its weakest point, you stop it from being practiced and you weaken it further. This enables you to strengthen a new habit.

Two ways to catch anxiety early, to nip it in the bud – Early intervention, and prevention.

Early Intervention – Think of an anxiety-provoking example. Let's say your friend is late coming over. This lateness creates a lot of worry thoughts.

Catch it early with a reminder, such as a sticky note on the clock – After seeing your reminder you might experience thoughts such as, they seem late, and maybe you feel tension in your shoulders. But by recognizing anxiety symptoms early, you stop yourself from giving in to the panic spiral.

Examples of reminders to use to stop the panic spiral – sticky notes; a rubber band around your wrist; put a bell on your pet; your name being called by a

friend or partner or spouse; change any activity as a reminder to yourself. Every time you see the reminder, check in to see if you are heading into the spiral.

When healing anxiety, a pitfall is trying to force you to relax.

Instead of trying to relax, try moving away from anxiety. To do this, gently shift your focus to the “sounds” of the “voices” beneath you, and relax with them. Observe them, and accept their presence. Let them be.

How to relax with the sounds/feelings/images of your anxiety? Ask yourself, what do you do that you enjoy doing, and find relaxing? When you are doing this activity, are you in the past, in the present, or in the future? Most likely you are in the present. And, when are you at your most productive? In the past? Present? Future? Again, most would say when they're in the present. *Strive to recall the sense of being in the present in order to strengthen the habit of relaxation, joy, and productivity.*

Prevention – The other way to nip anxiety in the bud is with prevention. Spend time every day teaching your body to relax. Here are some examples:



Train your body to relax with stimulation – Deliberately add stimulation to any moment by: sitting outside; add candles/incense/any enjoyable scent; nature recording or music; simply looking outside or at artwork; eating or drinking beverages or food such as caffeine, chocolate, or wine. Notice any calm this creates.

Train your body to relax with active relaxation – Mindfully walk, shower, eat; do house work or yard work; no matter where you are or what you are doing, intend that your body relax as you are being active!

Practice relaxing while you are stressed – Deliberately set up something annoying, nothing big, just a minor annoyance. Use annoying situations as an opportunity to practice some form of relaxation or mindfulness while you are annoyed. Experiment with placing it, like a template, over your state of irritability.

Heart-focused breathing – Practice noticing your heart area as you inhale, and your solar plexus area just below your heart as you exhale, to bring up the relaxation response in your body. Simply focus on this way of breathing for several moments or minutes throughout your day.