

## Managing Anxiety About the Future

### Grounding Techniques • Reframing Thoughts • Setting Realistic Short-Term Goals

Feeling anxious about the future is common during times of uncertainty — especially when facing job loss, career change, or life transitions. Worrying about “what might happen” can leave you feeling overwhelmed, restless, or stuck. The good news: there are practical steps you can take to regain a sense of calm and control.

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#### Why We Feel Anxious About the Future

Anxiety often comes from focusing on things we can’t control or imagining worst-case scenarios. The mind tries to prepare us for danger, but instead, it can keep us trapped in “what if” thinking. Understanding this helps you respond with strategies that keep you grounded in the present.

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#### Grounding Techniques to Calm the Mind

**1) 5–4–3–2–1 Senses Exercise**

- 5 - things you can see
- 4 - things you can touch
- 3 - things you can hear
- 2 - things you can smell
- 1 - thing you can taste

This pulls your attention away from anxious thoughts and into the present moment.

**2) Controlled Breathing**

- Inhale slowly for 4 seconds
- Hold for 2 seconds
- Exhale for 6 seconds
- Repeat for 1–2 minutes to slow your heart rate and settle your mind.

**3) Movement & Stretching**

Gentle movement — walking, stretching, yoga — can release muscle tension and signal to your brain that you are safe.

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#### Reframing Unhelpful Thoughts

Anxiety can distort thinking, making problems seem bigger and possibilities seem smaller. Reframing is about challenging these thoughts and replacing them with more balanced perspectives:

- Catastrophic Thought: “If I don’t get a job soon, I’ll never recover.”
- Reframe: “Finding a job takes time. I can take small steps each day to improve my chances.”
- Catastrophic Thought: “I can’t handle uncertainty.”
- Reframe: “I’ve handled challenges before, and I can do it again.”

Writing down anxious thoughts and creating realistic counter-statements can reduce their intensity.

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### Fact-Checking Your Thoughts:

When a worrying thought pops up, pause and ask yourself:

- What is the actual evidence for this?
- Have I faced something like this before, and how did it turn out?
- Am I predicting the worst without considering other possible outcomes?
- What would I say to a friend who had this thought?

Fact-checking helps separate fears from reality and brings your focus back to what you *know* to be true, rather than what you imagine might happen.

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### Setting Realistic Short-Term Goals

Breaking big, overwhelming concerns into small, achievable steps makes the future feel more manageable.

- Daily Goal Examples:
  - Apply for one job
  - Update one section of your resume
  - Go for a 20-minute walk
  - Call a friend for connection
- Weekly Goal Examples:
  - Attend one networking event or online workshop
  - Learn one new skill or tool relevant to your field
  - Practice an interview question

Small successes build momentum, increase confidence, and help anxiety shrink over time.

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### Remember:

You can't predict the future, but you can influence how you meet it. Focusing on the present moment, shifting your perspective, and setting achievable goals are powerful tools to steady your mind and create hope.

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### If you need support:



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