



Coping with Anxiety

LIFESKILLS TRAINING

Unit Goals and Objectives

In this unit, students will:

- ▶ **Identify** techniques for coping with anxiety.
- ▶ **Review and practice** the anxiety-reduction skills of deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.
- ▶ **Review and practice** cognitive self-control skills for dealing with anxiety.

Anxiety

- ▶ Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling that affects all of us at one time or another.
- ▶ Most of us feel anxious or nervous in situations when we are afraid we won't do as well as we would like to.



Anxiety Self-Assessment

- ▶ **EVERY** person experiences anxiety to one degree or another.
- ▶ It is important for us to know what causes us to feel anxious because it can help us be better prepared to cope with it.
- ▶ Think about situations that cause you to feel anxious.



Anxiety Reduction Techniques

There are a number of specific techniques for dealing with anxiety.

- ▶ Physical anxiety-reduction techniques help us relax our bodies.
- ▶ Cognitive anxiety-reduction techniques help us control thoughts that can cause us to feel anxious.



Deep Breathing

- ▶ Deep breathing can help either just before or while in a difficult situation.
- ▶ Procedure for Deep Breathing:
 1. Breathe in deeply into your abdomen for a count of 4.
 2. Hold it for a count of 4.
 3. Breathe out for a count of 4.
 4. Repeat 4 or 5 times.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Slowly relax all the muscles in your body.
4. Imagine yourself in a quiet, peaceful place.
5. Imagine yourself in the place where you started the exercise (for example, in your classroom)
6. Open your eyes.



Preparation and Practice

- Prepare and practice when you are getting ready for a performance situation.
- If the situation involves a specific skill, set of behaviors, or knowledge, some kind of practice or rehearsal is generally helpful.



Mental Rehearsal

- Imagine yourself in the important situation feeling completely relaxed and confident.
- Mentally practice what you will say and/or do and how you will deal with all the possible things that might happen.
- Do this over and over until you begin to feel more relaxed and confident.



Positive Thinking



Learn to become more aware of the things you are thinking to yourself when you are feeling anxious or nervous.



Identify any negative thoughts.



Examine these thoughts to see if they are based on irrational fears or beliefs.



Learn to catch yourself whenever you are thinking any of these negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones.



Say “Stop!” to yourself and replace these thoughts with more positive ones.

Scenarios for Positive Thinking Practice

- ▶ You are starting a new summer job and you are nervous you will not do well in the position.
- ▶ You have to make a speech in front of the whole class and you are nervous you will forget what to say.
- ▶ Friends have asked you to run in a race to raise money for a cause you believe in. You are sure you'll come in last.