

Select EMR Phrases for Somatization and Illness Anxiety

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These phrases are built for EPIC and so may have to be modified for other systems and/or to suit your needs.

.ILLNESSANXIETY

Health Anxiety Fact Sheet:

Brief, to the point, easy to read:

http://www.abct.org/docs/factsheets/HEALTH_ANXIETY.pdf

It's Not All in Your Head: How Worrying about Your Health Could Be Making You Sick--and What You Can Do about It

by Gordon J. G. Asmundson and Steven Taylor

This is a compassionate, practical book for anyone with health anxiety, and for those who live with them. It is 212 pages, written by psychologists

Conquering Health Anxiety: How to Break Free from the Hypochondria Trap

by Darren Sims

This is a shorter book (88 pages), written by a someone with personal experience with health anxiety.

.FEELINGSINVENTORY

Please visit and print out this feelings inventory:

https://www.cnvc.org/sites/default/files/feelings_inventory_0.pdf

This is useful in learning more about small changes in your emotional state, which can help us in managing pain, discomfort, anxiety, anger and depression. It works best if you keep a short log of key events and associated feelings each day.

.ANXIETYBREATHING

Use slow, controlled belly-breathing to lower your pulse and blood pressure a bit. With some practice, you will notice that this makes your anxiety much easier to tolerate. And, it can indirectly reduce anxious thinking.

Try it for just one full minute, TWICE a day - and at any moment you think of it. The more you practice, the more effective you make it. Remember though - this breathing should be as slow as you can comfortably make it.

Please see a short video here:

https://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/stressrecess/Level_Two/breathing.html

And three more short ones (under 3 minutes) here:
<http://www.nowmattersnow.org/skill/paced-breathing>

And finally, there is a good, free app, Breathe2Relax:
<http://t2health.dcoe.mil/apps/breathe2relax>

For more, look into:

The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook

by Edmund Bourne

This is the “bestseller” in anxiety. It also covers panic.

Mastery of Anxiety and Worry

by David Barlow

This book is oriented less toward panic and more towards managing worry and stress.

Anxiety Disorders Association of America

www.adaa.org

Please check this website. It is rich with information and support related to all anxiety conditions.

.DEPRESSIONACTIVATION

Whether or not you choose medication for depression, there are many other things you can do to speed and solidify your recovery. Namely, by choosing to expand your activity in a select, maintained manner.

Here's the trick, as you are probably aware: activation in general is especially difficult when you are depressed. BUT, we know that it is proven. These measures help.

Please ***pick just one*** of the options below. And then keep to it for week. And longer if it seems to help. We want early results, but it takes time and practice for these activities to really pay off.

One effective strategy with any of these items is to **keep a very short log**. Logging helps us build new habits when our brain wants things to stay the same. Simply jot down whatever you have done, and your mood before and after, on a 1-10 scale. Every day, just for now. I'd like to see this log later.

1. Activate physically. Do something to get your pulse up for at least 20 minutes, at least five days a week. Yes, I know you hear this all the time but in this case, we are specifically targeting your condition. Exercise is medicine!
2. Activate socially. People who connect are happier. We are all tribal beings. Yes, even introverts. Plan a phone call, a shared activity, a friendly outreach email, a coffee date... one contact you would not otherwise have, each day.
3. Activate accomplishment. Do one small thing that helps you to feel productive. It may be a daily bit of tidying, writing, organizing, or doing just a little extra at your job.

4. Activate pleasure. When depressed, it's harder to get satisfaction from pleasurable things. But practice makes it better! Be creative. Think...outings, healthy cooking and eating, seeing something pretty, reading something funny, taking a hot bath. The possibilities are limitless. Your job - to be taken seriously - is to plan one simple thing and to take as much pleasure from this moment as you can. Rather than look for daily success here, look for gradual skill-building. Who knew there is health in hedonism?

5. Activate gratitude. Write down Three Good Things that happened each day. Do this for just one to two weeks. It works best if done late, before bedtime, and if you write down whatever positive emotion you felt at the time. I would love to see this short list the next time we talk. For this particular approach, see this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57ru-P7EuMw> - you could find it to be a bit fast and dry, but it's only 12 minutes.

6. Activate giving. Think you have nothing to give? Prove yourself wrong. The act of giving will fire the same brain synapses as when we receive. Send cards of thanks or general appreciation. Mentor. Step into a campaign. Roll up your sleeves at a soup kitchen and see more smiles.

7. Activate problem-solving. Research shows that this is often the first casualty of depression. Problems seem to multiply and overwhelm, efforts to tackle become ineffective, and everything snowballs. Choose *one* problem to tackle. Make sure it's a manageable one, clearly defined. Brainstorm *all* possible solutions, including the most obvious and the outlandish. Make as long a list as you can. From this list, form your plan of action, with a date to check in with yourself on this plan a week later. The goal here is not to fix all the problems which weigh on you. The goal is to experience a more effective method of addressing one problem at a time.

8. Activate skepticism. We all engage in distorted thinking. It's part of being human. But it gets much more negative and pervasive during depression. Our take on things tends to be black-and-white, gloomy and even catastrophic. Try asking, "what is the evidence?" to support the negative thought you find yourself dwelling on. And then, "what is the other evidence?" to support a more balanced conclusion. This is changing of automatic thinking does take persistent practice. See the books by Burns below.

9. Activate acceptance. Strangely, fighting depression can have the effect of creating more mental strife and aggravating the problem. Life does bring sadness; much more to some of us than to others and you might find, ironically, that mindfully making room for it can enable serenity. Try simply naming the unlimited shades of emotion we all experience, using this list as a guide: https://www.cnvc.org/sites/default/files/feelings_inventory_0.pdf, And see the book by Williams and others on mindfulness, below.

10. Finally, if tense and anxious, deactivate. Use slow, deep belly-breathing to lower your pulse and blood pressure a bit. With just a little practice, you will notice that this indirectly reduces worry and catastrophic thinking, and it helps with sleep. Try it for just one full minute, but TWICE a day - and at any moment you think of it. The more you practice it in easy moments, the more effective it is during crisis. Remember though - this breathing should be as slooow as you can comfortably make it. See a short video here:

http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/stressrecess/animations/diaphragmatic_breathing/diaphragmatic_breathing.html

And three more short ones (under 3 minutes) here:

<http://www.nowmattersnow.org/skill/paced-breathing>

I predict that whatever you choose, your commitment may fade very soon. *Please expect this* and simply nudge yourself back on track as soon as you can.

For more, look up:

Depression for Dummies

by Laura Smith and Charles Elliott

This book is a nice, practical overview of proven approaches to depression.

The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness

by Mark Williams and others

An effective approach to depression based on the concept of acceptance. It includes a CD of guided meditations. This book may be especially good if you're anxious or if you tend to "think too much."

Feeling Good and The Feeling Good Workbook

by David Burns.

The classic self-help books on changing negative patterns of thinking.

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

www.dbsalliance.org

Everyone with a chronic mood disorder, or living with someone with bipolar, should spend time with this website.

I look forward to hearing your news!