

31 - Appendix C. Steps in the AWARE Technique

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1. Accept anxiety. Anxiety is natural, normal, and necessary for survival. The sensations you experience are a normal part of anxiety, even when they become intense. Anxiety increases when you get anxious about feeling anxious. But just because you feel anxious doesn't necessarily mean there's anything wrong. Your brain reacts in the same way whether it perceives actual danger or imagined danger. You can view anxiety as energy, given to help you deal with dangerous or difficult situations. Don't try to avoid, suppress, or control anxiety. If you do, it will become more intense and prolonged.
2. Watch it from a distance. Look at it without judgment—not good, not bad. Rate it on a 0-10 scale, and watch it go up and down. Be detached. Remember, you are not your anxiety. The more you can separate yourself from the experience, the more you can just watch it. Look at your thoughts, feelings, and actions as if you're a friendly, but not overly concerned, bystander.
3. Act constructively with it. Act as if you aren't anxious. Whatever you can do without anxiety, you can do it with it. You can hold a conversation, do chores, walk, drive, exercise, dance, sing, pray, and write with anxiety. Breathe slowly and normally. Don't run away from anxiety or avoid anxiety-provoking situations. If you do, you give yourself the message that anxiety is bad or dangerous.
4. Repeat the above. Continue to Accept, Watch, and Act constructively with the anxiety.
5. Expect the best. Most of the time, what you most fear doesn't happen. Give yourself lots of opportunities to use the steps above so you can gain confidence that anxiety always decreases. And your difficulties with anxiety will decrease once you stop fighting it or trying to avoid or control it. APPENDIX C Steps in the AWARE Technique Adapted with permission from Beck and Emery (1985).