

# Becoming Okay with Anxiety: The Antidote to Fight or Flight

Turning toward anxiety with openness, curiosity and attention can be a useful skill to help clients cope with symptoms of anxiety. When we fixate on events of the future or the past, anxiety can increase, making it difficult to concentrate or think clearly. Our bodies rev up, preparing for danger or conflict, and it can be difficult to calm the mind and body. Increasing awareness of the body can allow a client to sit with and learn to tolerate anxiety. The following steps can help your clients change their relationship with anxiety, turning it from something to be avoided into an opportunity to deepen their connection with God. Part of the goal of this exercise is that they can do this when they're feeling anxious by themselves.

## Steps to calming the mind and body

*Step 1:  
Become aware of  
anxiety in the  
body*



Guide your client to notice physical sensations of anxiety in their body. Ask them to bring their attention to points of tension, starting from the top of the head, down to the feet. They may sense tightness in their chest, pressure at their temples, a racing pulse, or shallowness in their breath. Have them describe the sensations out loud and where they are located. Direct them to use abdominal breathing if they find this step difficult.

*Step 2:  
Become aware of  
God's presence*



Have your client acknowledge to themselves and God that they are feeling anxious. Direct them to observe their anxiety, moments that it intensifies and lessens, rather than pushing it away, fighting it, or trying to change it. Have them say, "This is anxiety. I am going to be present with it, and God is present with me."

*Step 3:  
Note thoughts  
and let them go*



Have your clients note anxious thoughts and observe them as though they are clouds passing in the sky. Help them picture themselves directing their thoughts to God, turning them over to him.

*Step 4:  
Stay grounded  
and connected to  
God*



Have your client notice points of contact between their body and the surface beneath them. Ask them to notice what it is like to have their weight fully supported by the chair or ground. Have them observe where their weight is falling. See if they can imagine God tenderly holding and supporting them in the moment.

*Step 5:  
Respond with  
curiosity*



Have your client ask themselves about what triggered their anxiety. Help them to explore questions like, “What is causing me to feel this way?,” “What is my anxiety really about?,” “Is this something that comes up often for me?,” or “What is God trying to show me about my anxiety?” Your client’s answers may lead to deeper exploration of wounds.

Having gone through the preceding steps, it may be helpful to conclude by asking your client how they are feeling in the moment, paying attention to any changes they sense in their body or in the intensity of their anxiety. In further sessions, the client’s experience of God during the process could also be explored in greater depth.