

Managing
Stress and
Anxiety

A Therapeutic Workbook
from
PeachTree Professional Education, Inc.

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About This Workbook

This practical guide for improving Individual and Family Interactions is intended to be an adjunct to therapy, for use by adults, adolescents, individuals, couples and families, to begin and continue making necessary life changes.

**Useful for
Individuals
Families and
Education
Groups**

Managing Stress and Anxiety contains several individual sections that will help people begin to better understand their stress and anxiety, to acknowledge and address the other emotions behind their stress and anxiety, and to make healthy behavioral changes in response to stressful situations.

This workbook was designed with a simple and educational format, enhanced with worksheets, exercises and ideas to re-enforce therapeutic learning.

ABOUT PEACHTREE AND THE AUTHORS:

**This
workbook
can be
effectively
utilized by
assigning
individual
sections
as needed,
or by
assigning
all sections
in sequence.**

- ◆ ***PeachTree Professional Education, Inc.*** is a diversified company, committed to providing quality, professional continuing education services for mental health, school and criminal justice professionals, and producing practical therapeutic publications and professional resources.
- ◆ ***Paula Saxon Nongard, MA,*** is the Director of Professional Relations for PeachTree Professional Education, Inc. She is a skilled administrator, experienced in communications and education. As co-author of this and many other therapeutic publications, Paula has brought her knowledge, insight and organizational skills together to create exercises and activities to help reinforce the concepts described in the text.

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**This
workbook,
like all others
from
PeachTree,
was created
to help
give people
Options,
Skills and
Tools
to help make
Healthy,
Effective
Life
Changes**

Other Resources Available from PeachTree:

- ◆ *Getting Along: A Guide for Healthy Communications*
- ◆ *In Control: Healthy Anger Expression*
- ◆ *The First Three Steps: Guided Recovery Utilizing AA and NA Texts*
- ◆ *The Family Peace and Sanity Treaty*
- ◆ *The NSAS: Nongard Substance Addiction Screening*
- ◆ *The NSRI: Nongard Strengths and Resources Inventory*
- ◆ *The NDI: Nongard Depression Index*
- ◆ *The NCCQ: Nongard Couple's Conflict Questionnaire*
- ◆ *Therapeutic Relaxation & Distress Tolerance Training Audio CD*
- ◆ *11 Solutions to Highly Difficult Clients ~ Effective Interventions*
- ◆ *Crossing the Line ~ Psychosexual Disorders*

Descriptions for these publications can be found on the last page.

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The first two educational sections and worksheet sets help clients to better understand what Stress and Anxiety are, and how they experience and express it both internally and externally.

The last two sections guide the client through developing alternative, Healthy coping methods for handling their Stress and Anxiety, to best reduce and minimize the effects of anxiety related symptoms.

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“Anxiety” is a ‘normal’ emotion and can be both positive and/or negative, depending on how it is experienced.

Anxiety Disorders, though distressing, are very common.

Anxiety Related Disorders can be successfully treated.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a powerful, *normal* human emotion that most everyone has experienced at one time or another, just like feelings of joy, sadness, anger, peacefulness or embarrassment.

Feelings of anxiety may include nervousness, like ‘butterflies in your stomach’ before a big event, or the queasy tension or stress created when someone close to you is angry, or the way your heart ‘pounds in your ears’ when you are afraid.

Anxiety can propel you into action. It can encourage you to be more prepared for challenging situations. In general, the normal emotion of anxiety can help you to jump the hurdles life puts before you.

What is Anxiety Disorder?

An anxiety *disorder* is a *real* illness or mental health condition. Instead of helping us to function better in life, anxiety, as a disorder, generally has opposite or more damaging effects. While often related to life experiences, these disorders also frequently have biological bases, and can be hereditary.

An anxiety disorder can make you feel nervous or anxious *most of the time*, without any obvious reason. The feelings you may experience can become so bothersome that you may feel the need to actually stop doing some things you normally would do throughout the day, or to do them completely differently, in an effort to feel better, or less anxious. Sometimes, ‘spells’ of anxiety can be so strong and severe that you are actually paralyzed with fear, and unable to function at all.

Who has Anxiety Disorders?

Anxiety disorders are the *most common* mental health disorders treated today, in both in-patient and out-patient settings. It is estimated that **25-30%** of Americans will experience some kind of anxiety related difficulty, at some point in their lifetime, which can cause them to experience extreme emotional discomfort, the inability to function, or to follow through on even the most simplistic of day-to-day tasks.

Anxiety and related mental health problems include:

- ◆ Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- ◆ Panic Disorder
- ◆ Specific phobias
- ◆ Social phobias
- ◆ Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- ◆ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- ◆ Other mixed-anxiety disorders

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There will always be events that occur in our lives that will produce stress and anxiety.

The most important thing to do is to learn how to manage your thoughts and behaviors, in order to reduce the effects of stress and anxiety related symptoms.

What Can Be Done About Anxiety Disorders?

There *is* help for anxiety disorders. Medications may be part of the prescribed treatment routine, and these can be of benefit to many clients.

However, it is important to recognize that medication alone cannot cure an individual of many of the symptoms related to anxiety. There must be more interventions.

Cognitive-behavioral (basically thinking and action oriented) treatment approaches help an individual learn to manage their life, despite the presence of problems associated with stress and anxiety, by addressing the physical symptoms, as well as many of the situational and emotional cues that tend to make the cycle of anxiety an endless problem.

Symptoms of Anxiety Disorder

As stated, anxiety, as a 'mental health condition', differs from anxiety as a 'normal human emotion'.

Even with successful treatment, individuals with an anxiety disorder may still occasionally find themselves in situations that produce tension and stress or uncomfortable feelings. This is normal, just as it is normal for people to worry about certain problems and conflicts that they experience in life.

The hallmark of anxiety disorder however, that makes it different from the normal emotions of anxiety, is the exacerbation of and *chronic worrying* about day-to-day events, activities, and situations, that then keep a person from solving problems and being able to complete daily tasks.

Living with this disorder generally means constantly anticipating or predicting disaster, worrying excessively about money, family, health, work, or even a seemingly unidentifiable thing or concept. Sometimes, even the thought of making it through the day can provoke stress, worry and anxiety.

The physical symptoms of an anxiety disorder may include sweating, shaking or difficulty breathing. A person may excessively pace, wring their hands, smoke, or fidget. They frequently experience nausea and severe muscle tension. They cannot seem to relax, generally do not eat well, and may not be able to sleep through the night, which may all eventually lead to other physical problems, such as fatigue, headaches, and weight loss.

Other symptoms often associated with anxiety (and also of panic attacks, which may or may not be a component of an individual's anxiety), include the chronic fear of going crazy or losing control; of dying; or the inability to see or create healthy resolutions to everyday life situations.

The anxious person will often *feel* out of control, or that they have no power in certain situations. These emotional symptoms and aspects of stress and anxiety tend to feed upon themselves, often producing even more intense feelings of anxiety. It is not uncommon for the anxious person to spend all day worrying themselves into even more severe problems.

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Managing Stress & ANXIETY

WORKSHEET (1)

This worksheet will help you to *begin understanding your Anxiety*. READ and FOLLOW the directions, and be as specific and detailed as possible.



WRITE DOWN what "Anxiety" means to you.



WRITE DOWN some typical ways that you experience anxiety.

Shortened EXAMPLE: I Worry about Money and Being Alone, most all of the time.



WRITE DOWN what specific kinds of Problems that your Anxiety has caused you.

Shortened EXAMPLE: Family Trouble (... Fighting...), Sleeplessness,
Health Problems (excessive smoking)

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WHAT DO WE FEAR ??

Understanding exactly what you are afraid of can help to reduce the symptoms of anxiety and stress.

"We have nothing to fear but fear itself." Ever heard that before? While it may not always be true, it is often surprisingly very true for the person suffering from anxiety disorder.

We know that when an anxious person finds themselves in new situations or experiencing changes in their expectations, they may become overly sensitive to their surroundings.

We know that this heightened awareness often brings on feelings of fear.

We know that fear is a powerful emotion related to anxiety that has many physical manifestations.

We know that the physical feelings that exist with anxiety often build on themselves, causing the anxious person to feel even more anxious.

We also know that this cycle must be broken in order for an individual to be able to effectively manage their anxiety.

But, from here, we still don't know exactly *what* they are afraid of, and so we don't know exactly where to begin making changes, and we may only be able to treat the symptoms of the stress and anxiety.

Building self-confidence by gaining new skills and experiences can help reduce stress and anxiety related to the fear of a potential event.

Sure, all people have different fears related to different things. Some are afraid of planes, others elevators, storms, water, heights, close quarters, insects, social situations and etceteras. But what do all of these people have in common? What is the core element of anxiety that brings all of these people together with a common interest?

Take the person afraid of flying. What are they afraid of? Crashing? Dying? Even when we present this person with all the facts related to airplane safety (you can be born on a plane and fly for 80 years before having even a near crash... there are 1000's of fatal car wrecks daily, and less than 100 fatal plane crashes, small planes included, per year...) and yet they are still fearful. Many people even become anxious just *thinking* about flying. "But what if this...? Or what if that?" So what are they afraid of?

The number one answer to most all anxiety related fears is not the potential horrible situation or outcome of an event. Underneath all of the worry and sweat and jitters and hearts pounding, most anxiety disordered persons are simply afraid, whether they have recognized this fact or not, *that they will not be able to handle a situation, if it were to happen.*

Anxious people are pros at recognizing their weaknesses and their inabilities. Their worries and fears stem from imagining themselves in situations with only their deficits, instead of picturing themselves with their strengths, skills and abilities.

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Section 1

Understanding Stress and Anxiety

**Learning
to
avoid
situations
is okay,

but it is
better
in the
long run
to learn
to manage
them.**

The person afraid of flying may imagine themselves on a plane that is forced to make an emergency landing in the water, and all they can think about is how they can't swim very well. So, even if their potential flight only travels over small lakes or rivers, they will drive instead, just in case, to be safe.

There are two ways to look at this response. On the one hand, the person has been creative and has taken action to alleviate their potential anxiety by driving instead of flying. On the other hand, they could have chosen to fly anyway, and to face their fears armed with a safety life vest, comprehensive water landing instructions, and a YMCA or Red Cross course in swimming and water safety, which would probably help them out in numerous other situations down the road.

This second option, however, requires a great amount of personal emotional and physical risk, and may simply feel too overwhelming for the anxious person to even consider, at least until they learn to focus on their strengths, and not their weaknesses.

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'Stress' and 'Anxiety' are very much alike, in that they are both triggered by the prospect or actual occurrence of 'change'.

WHAT CAN I DO ??

It is often beneficial for the stressed and anxious person to begin formally recognizing and understanding what happens to them, physically, intellectually and emotionally, when they are experiencing the symptoms of anxiety. This newly compiled knowledge, when taken from a therapeutic or proactive perspective, can help assist in taking more control of their own body and mind, and therefore also relieving the bothersome stress and anxiety related symptoms.

Read through the following education sections and the matching worksheets, and then complete each group as instructed.

Take your time, make sure you understand, ask questions if necessary, and be as descriptive as possible with your work.

Remember: Anxiety is one of the most difficult feelings and disorders to put into words. You should Not be afraid or ashamed to benefit yourself by seeking help or discussing the worksheets with a counselor, family member or friend.

Anxiety and Stress.

There is a relationship between anxiety and stress, and many would say that anxiety and stress are actually the same thing.

We use the word 'Stress' often when describing the uncomfortable feelings we experience in everyday life. A person who is "stressed out" may very well be having problems related to anxiety, or perhaps the fear of being unable to manage certain life difficulties.

Stress is simply any *change* that we experience, either positive or negative, that deviates from our expectations.

Stress, like anything else, can be handled in either healthy or unhealthy ways. Without options or the knowledge of effective methods for solving problems, a stressed or anxious person frequently engages in 'quick fix' behaviors to bring rapid emotional relief.

Dealing with change, (the heart of stress), is often difficult for the anxiety disordered person, who tends to fear alterations in routine expectations or situations.

Learning to manage stress *must* be a component of effective anxiety disorder treatment.

It is important to realize that no matter how much medication we ingest, no matter how many self-help groups we go to, life will still bring stressful events and unexpected changes, that may be either in or out of our control. If we are prepared to handle the stress that these changes can bring, we are better able to conquer our anxiety.

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Section 1

Understanding Stress and Anxiety

There seems to be a fairly predictable pattern or cycle that stressed or anxious individuals fall into, when difficult situations arise, and poor actions are taken.

We all have an anticipated 'Routine', or an expected plan for how certain situations or our day in general will go.

Then, there may be a change, or an event that deviates from what we have expected or anticipated. This is called an 'event trigger'.

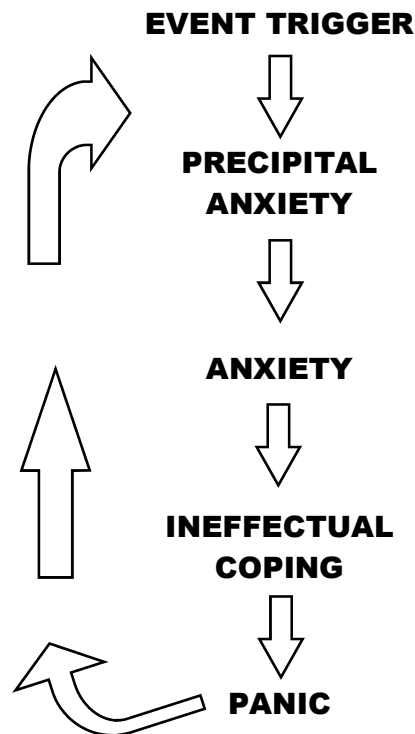
From this trigger or change naturally stems perhaps instant, yet presumably temporary feelings of confusion, insecurity, and uncertainty; otherwise known as 'stress'.

Left unmanaged or unresolved by lack of healthy or effective coping skills, abilities or techniques, or when acutely dwelled upon under shadow of worry or fear, these feelings of stress can then go on and develop into even further anxious or disturbing thoughts and feelings, and may even produce panic experiences.

Again, left unresolved or ineffectually managed, the cycle continues, again and again.

While we might all claim to like 'adventure' most of us are more comfortable with our daily routines and schedules than we admit.

ANXIETY CYCLE



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HANDLING STRESS & ANXIETY PRODUCING SITUATIONS

In order to change and improve the future, it is often helpful to first review and learn from the past.

**Understanding
the past
can help us
to make
the future
more
manageable.**

Chances are good that the same types of situations continue to occur producing feelings of anxiety, and that you usually respond to these situations in the same ways, and achieve the same results each time. This is called using Automatic or Habitual Responses.

It is important to understand and *be aware* of the specific details, including times, locations, persons, etc., of the kinds of situations that seem to produce Anxiety for you, time after time.

In other words, *what kinds of things happen that result in you feeling Anxious?*

It is also important to understand and recognize what you do, or what coping strategies and behaviors you act out in response to a situation, in an attempt to confront or resolve it.

Or, in other words, *what are your thoughts, actions and reactions?*

What do you think, believe and do to handle Anxiety producing situations?

**Be aware
of what
you
do...**

And, in order to make changes that will impact the outcome of future Anxiety producing situations, you need to understand and recognize what the *results* are of the behaviors you choose to resolve these situations.

In other words, *does what you do, to handle an Anxiety producing situation usually make things better... or worse?*

**and
where
it
gets
you.**

When you begin to see the whole picture in front of you of what triggers your anxiety, what you think and do when you are anxious, and what happens after you respond to your anxiety, it can become a life changing resource for you.

Consider this Example:

Situation: Chris was late coming home again, without warning or explanation.

Automatic Response: I pictured a fire-ball collision on the side of the highway again and again in my mind, had several drinks, raged at Chris when he/she came home, accused Chris of not loving or respecting me, and threw his/her coat across the room, breaking my bottle of rum.

Results: We screamed at each other, and Chris left, after I threw the car keys across the room.

**Doing
the
same things
over and
over
again
usually
gets you
the same
results,
every time.**

If this example was a typical situation for you, you could now begin to recognize that your typical Automatic/Habitual responses to Chris' behavior typically achieves the same results, and that the real situation is typically never resolved.

Unresolved situations will generally keep occurring, over and over again.

Doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results is the unofficial definition of insanity.

We only know how to do what we know how to do. To do something differently, we must learn to take the risk of learning and trying new things.

Learning from past situations can help you change the (your) future, and help you to achieve more positive results.

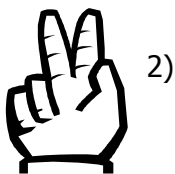
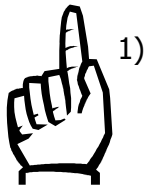
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This worksheet will help you to begin understanding what triggers your Anxiety. READ and FOLLOW the directions, and be as specific and detailed as possible.

THINK about some recent times that you felt Anxious.

WRITE DOWN a brief yet detailed description of two situations that occurred, which resulted in you feeling Anxious.

EXAMPLE: *Chris was late coming home again, with no warning or explanation.*



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COGNITIVE (thinking) PRODUCTS of ANXIETY

Stress and Anxiety affect our thoughts and beliefs -- and -- our thoughts and beliefs can also affect our Anxiety and Stress.

We must seek out and tell ourselves the truth, because we act on what we think and believe.

We act on what we believe. If you believe things that are not true, you will still act on these beliefs. It is essential for the stressed or anxious person to begin to tell themselves the truth about their emotions and situations that produce anxiety.

Truth is different from positive confession or affirmation. There has recently been, in both religious businesses and mental health, a philosophy teaching 'positive affirmation' as the key to solving problems. While there is nothing inherently wrong with positive affirmations, these affirmations must be based in *truth*.

The truths we tell ourselves must be based in reality, not just on what we want or wish it to be.

For example, consider the person who, following the positive affirmation theory, continually tells themselves that they are 'healthy, wealthy and wise', because they would like to be healthy, wealthy, and wise. If this person is actually HIV-positive, has an IQ of 70, and lives on a limited income source, they are likely not to become healthy, wealthy, and wise, no matter how many positive affirmations they tell themselves. And so, even though we want to tell ourselves positive, uplifting things, it is important that they be grounded in reality.

Instead of telling yourself that "Nothing will go wrong", you should consider telling yourself that, "If something does go wrong, I can handle it!"

Sometimes the opposite problem occurs. The stressed or anxious person may be telling themselves mis-beliefs or cognitive errors (things that are not true) about themselves, their situations, and the future. The stressed or anxious person often says things to themselves like, "I won't be able to handle this situation." "It's only getting worse." "If I lose control or somebody sees me sweating, that would be awful."

When negative or non-truthful thoughts and images enter our minds, we must learn to counter them with positive and truthful thoughts or images.

The anxious person is an expert at creating cognitive errors and acting on mis-beliefs. If you believe, for example, that, "this situation will never change," you will probably not take action to change the situation, even if it is unpleasant. If you believe that, "there is no way to solve problems," you will act by not solving the problem.

It is important to change these misbeliefs or cognitive errors, and replace them with truthful statements.

There are three basic kinds of thoughts related to anxiety and stress.

PHANTOM THOUGHTS / IMAGES: Phantom thoughts and images are those pictures and beliefs that do not appear to come from anywhere specific. These are the distressing (and usually untrue) thoughts and images that just seem to 'pop' into our minds, and when we think about them, they cause us anxiety and worry.

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NEGATIVE Self-IMPLANTS: Negative Implants are the beliefs and images that we conjure up and tell ourselves, often in response to Phantom Thoughts. Generally, these thoughts and images are not true, or are only slightly true, and they, too, begin to cause us more feelings of anxiety and worry.

POSITIVE Self-IMPLANTS: Positive Implants are the most important kinds of thoughts and images related to anxiety. These are the thoughts and pictures that *are* true or at least more reasonable, that we *need* to be telling or showing ourselves, no matter how difficult it may be to accept them, at first.

It is often helpful to have other people talk with us about our fears and worries, because other people can often be more objective, and can see things from different perspectives than we can when we are caught up in the emotion of an event.

Consider this Example:

SITUATION: Chris is late coming home from work, with no warning or explanation.

MIND / THOUGHTS / BELIEFS / IMAGES:

- 1.) PHANTOM THOUGHT / IMAGE: Fireball collision on side of road.
- 2.) NEGATIVE IMPLANT THOUGHT / IMAGE: Chris must be in a fireball collision on the side of the road, or he/she would have called. I should Worry.

BODY / PHYSICAL REACTIONS: Heart races, hands and teeth clench, excessive sweating....

- 3.) ACTIONS/BEHAVIORS: Pace the floor, have a few drinks, smoke, call the office, check the hospitals ...
- 4.) CYCLE CONTINUES

This is a common scenario for many people, whether they are anxiety disordered or not. The difficulty of situations like these comes when we do not *recognize* and then attempt to *counter* our Automatic Phantom or Negative Implant thoughts and images with Positive or Truthful thoughts and images. If we allow ourselves to carry on believing the falsehoods or unsubstantiated thoughts and pictures in our minds, we will continue to act on them, and this can cause us much distress and despair.

The following two worksheets are designed to help you Identify the Automatic Phantom and Negative Self-Implant Thoughts and Images that you lay on yourself, that are not true, and to learn to replace them with ones that are true, or at least more realistic.

Sometimes it can be difficult for us to actually recognize or accept the automatic things we tell ourselves that are not true. This is because by definition, or at least assumption, we usually wouldn't tell ourselves things that we really knew were untrue. If you find this assignment difficult or confusing, you are encouraged to discuss the matter with a counselor, spouse, friend or relative.

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It is often easier for an outside person to be more objective at recognizing these kinds of mis-beliefs. An outside source may also be able to help you come up with realistic and healthy Positive Self-Implant Thoughts, more easily than you could on your own. Do not be afraid to seek out and ask for this help.

The most important part of the first worksheet is the Positive Self-Implant Thoughts. These are the realistic things that you *should* tell yourself when you feel stressed or anxious. You may want to use a totally separate sheet of paper for this list, and keep it with you all the time for reference and support when you are feeling stressed or anxious. Even when you are not feeling particularly stressed or anxious, review these Positive Thoughts, and practice telling them to yourself in front of a mirror, again and again. This is how you develop new habits or automatic behaviors to replace the old, unhealthy ones.

**It is
very helpful
to develop
(on paper)
pre-determined
peaceful
thoughts
and
images
to focus on
when we are
feeling
stressed
and
anxious.**

The next worksheet discusses your distressing Phantom and Negative Self-Implant Images, and should be easier for you to complete on your own. This is not an art contest, and so there is no need to worry about the artistic quality of your drawings. Stick figures or objects are just fine. Do try, however, to put down on paper in picture form some of the distressing images that invade your mind when you are feeling stressed or anxious.

If you need more paper, get it and use it. Sometimes it can be a great release simply to put these thoughts and images on paper, where they tend to suddenly become fairly insignificant, or at least less ominous to us.

The most important pictures to draw are those that are pleasing, relaxing and calming. These pictures will counter your distressing images, so you might want to use completely different pieces of paper that you can carry with you at all times and refer to when needed.

Take your time and draw Positive, more accurate pictures of distressing situations. Or simply draw pictures of places, people or things that represent peace, calm and relaxation, even if they are not specifically related to the distressing situation you are experiencing. When you are having negative or distressing thoughts and images, pull out these positive pictures or just retrieve them in your mind and work to focus on them, instead.

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This worksheet will help you to become more aware of what you automatically begin to think and believe about anxiety and stress producing situations, and to show the reactionary relationships between thoughts and feelings.

READ and FOLLOW the directions, and be as specific and detailed as possible.

THINK carefully about the situations and times when you feel Anxious.

WRITE DOWN what thoughts and feelings (Phantom, Negative Self-Implants) you Automatically engage in or experience when you are Anxious.

Stress and Anxiety Producing Situation:



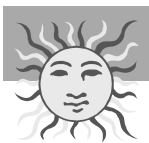
Phantom THOUGHTS: These things 'pop' into my head:

I begin to FEEL :



Negative Self - Implant THOUGHTS:

I begin to FEEL :



POSITIVE Self - Implant THOUGHTS: These are the things I tell myself (or SHOULD) that are TRUE or at least more reasonable about the situation :

I Begin to FEEL :

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This worksheet will help you to become more aware of what you automatically begin to see and believe about anxiety and stress producing situations, and to show the relationships between images and feelings.

READ and FOLLOW the directions, and be as specific and detailed as possible.

THINK carefully about the situations and times when you feel Anxious.

WRITE DOWN or actually DRAW the Images and Pictures (Phantom, Negative Self-Implants) you Automatically see in your mind and experience when you are Anxious.

Stress and Anxiety Producing Situation:



Phantom IMAGES: These pictures 'pop' into my head:

I begin to FEEL :

Negative Self - Implant IMAGES:



I begin to FEEL :



Positive Self - Implant IMAGES: These are the things I see in my mind (OR SHOULD invasion) that are TRUE or at least more reasonable about the situation :

I Begin to FEEL :

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PHYSICAL PRODUCTS of ANXIETY

Experiencing Stress or Anxiety causes our bodies to change and react physically, and triggers our Automatic or Habitual Response Behaviors.

As discussed, Stress and Anxiety affect us both emotionally and physically.

You may not even be aware of how Stress and Anxiety affect you physically. Often when we become caught up in the 'emotion' of situations, we forget about the physical sensations being created and experienced.

Think about how your body physically reacts, Automatically, when you begin to feel Stressed or Anxious.

Does your Heart Rate Accelerate?

Do you Sweat?

Do your Muscles Tighten?

Does your Head Hurt?

Does your Mind Race, or go Blank?

Do you Twitch or Startle?

Think about what you automatically *do*, physically, when you are Stressed or Anxious.

Do you Pace or Fidget?

Do you Tap your Fingers?

Do you Drink or Use Drugs?

Do you Lash Out at Others?

Do you Talk to Yourself?

Do you Hide from Others?

Do you Avoid or essentially Run Away from Situations?

Do you Cry or Laugh?

Do you Hurt yourself?

When we are *aware* of how our body automatically reacts physically when we are Stressed or Anxious, we can begin to recognize those feelings and manage our behaviors, *before they get out of control*.

The Physical Stress that Anxiety can put on our bodies can be detrimental if left unmanaged.

This is important. The physical effects of Stress and Anxiety can be very hard on our bodies. The increased physical stress that Anxiety often produces can lead to fatigue, headaches, high blood pressure, and, not to worry you further, even heart attacks, if left unmanaged.

Also, when you can begin to recognize the first physical symptoms of your Stress or Anxiety, you can use them as 'Warning Signs' to indicate that you may need to control your Automatic Response Behaviors.

This is especially helpful if your Automatic Response Behaviors are Self-Destructive in any way. *Consider this Example:*

You can use the physical symptoms of your Stress or Anxiety as positive triggers to alter your Automatic Response Behaviors.

MY BODY: When I get Stressed or Anxious, my heart races, I clench my hands and teeth, and I sweat a lot.

MY BEHAVIORS: When I get Stressed or Anxious, I pace the floor, snap at the people around me, and usually have a few drinks, to calm me down.

If you are *aware* of the physical feelings of your heart racing and muscles clenching, you could recognize that you are probably getting anxious and are about to engage in the unhealthy response behaviors of drinking to "solve your problems" and snapping at the people around you that may or may not have anything to do with your situation.

Being *aware* of these physical warning signs gives you the chance to choose Optional Healthy Response Behaviors, saving yourself and others from the fallout of destructive, unhealthy behaviors, and provides an opportunity to resolve the uncomfortable situations.

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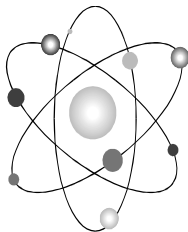
This worksheet will help you to become more aware of how you feel physically, and what you do automatically, when you are Anxious, showing the relationships between physical feelings and behaviors.

READ and FOLLOW the directions, and be as specific and detailed as possible.

THINK carefully about the situations and times when you feel Anxious.

WRITE DOWN what happens to your Body Physically, AND what kinds of Behaviors you Automatically engage in, when you are Anxious.

MY BODY:



Heart:

Hands:

Legs:

Stomach:

Other Physical Anxiety Symptoms:

MY AUTOMATIC *UNHEALTHY* BEHAVIORS:



MY AUTOMATIC *HEALTHY* BEHAVIORS:

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Managing Stress & ANXIETY

WORKSHEET (6)

This worksheet will help you to begin understanding how you normally, Automatically or Habitually handle your Anxiety.

READ and FOLLOW the directions, and be as specific and detailed as possible.

THINK carefully about the Anxiety producing Situations you described on previous worksheets. How did you attempt to express your distressing feelings, thoughts and images to others?

In what ways did you make an effort to confront or resolve the situations?

WRITE DOWN how you Verbally and Physically handled each situation, including quotes from what you really said, and things you actually did.

Shortened EXAMPLE:

Verbally: When Chris finally came home, I immediately expressed my worry, anger and frustration with verbal assaults. I accused Chris of not loving me.

Physically: I drank excessively, threw Chris's coat across the room, and broke my bottle of rum.



1) VERBALLY:



PHYSICALLY:



2) VERBALLY:



PHYSICALLY:

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Managing Stress & Anxiety **WORKSHEET (7)**

This worksheet will help you to begin understanding the Results and Consequences of how you usually or automatically handle your Anxiety.

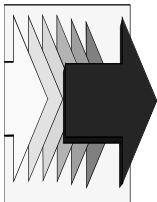
READ and FOLLOW the directions, and be as specific and detailed as possible.

THINK carefully about the situations you have previously described.

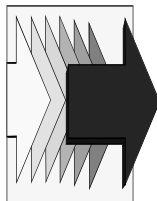
WRITE DOWN what happened, both short-term and long-term as a result of your Verbal and Physical Responses (from the previous worksheet) to each Situation.

EXAMPLE: Chris and I began screaming and yelling at each other, and Chris ended up leaving, after I threw the car keys across the room.

After Chris was gone, I again became stressed and anxious, because I didn't know where he/she went, or when he/she was coming back.



Short-Term:



Long-Term:

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TOLERATING STRESSFUL Situations

Stressful situations ARE going to come, but you can be prepared to tolerate them with minimal distressing symptoms.

Stressful and uncomfortable situations and events *are* going to happen. There may be times when we can attempt to ward-off or reduce the immanence of events, but this is usually not the case. Life just happens sometimes, and there is nothing we can do about it. We do, however, have choices and options for how to handle such stressful situations when they do come.

These next few skills we will discuss will not be able to change the facts of the situations or make them disappear, but they can make them more easy to tolerate, which will reduce you level of misery, and this is good.

DISTRESS TOLERANCE TRAINING (DTT)

Distress Tolerance Training is a combination of techniques designed to help minimize the impact of stress and anxiety by developing relaxation skills and countering distressing thoughts and images.

These skills are *not* designed (as many relaxation tapes are) to put a person to sleep (although they could be helpful with this at night for some with sleeplessness difficulties) but rather they should teach effective and valuable techniques that you can use anywhere to help calm down and relax, whenever you find yourself in stressful or anxiety producing situations.

Being aware of how our bodies react physically to anxiety and stress can help us learn how to consciously relax.

THERAPEUTIC Muscle RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Taking into account what you have learned about yourself in the previous worksheets, think again about how you react physically when you are stressed and anxious. Your muscles become tense and your heart races and other such negative physical symptoms occur.

Learning both to recognize these sensations when they begin to occur, and how to counter them by consciously making an effort to physically relax can greatly reduce the physical and emotional impact of your stress and anxiety related symptoms.

NOTE: *If you have PeachTree Professional Education's Audio CD on Therapeutic Relaxation & Distress Tolerance Training, play the first track now. Those of you without the CD should still be able to implement the following exercises.*

DO THIS: Read carefully through these instructions and then follow through with them, or have a partner read through them for you, as you follow the directions.

◆ Take a moment for yourself and lie on the floor or sit comfortably in a chair. Close your eyes and try to relax. Your breathing should be slow, smooth and rhythmic.

You should practice these exercises again and again for the greatest positive effect.

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Section 3

Tolerating Anxiety AND Stress

Remember to keep your breathing slow, smooth and rhythmic. This will really help to keep you relaxed.

- ◆ Now that you are comfortable, slowly begin to gently tense the muscles in your hands, arms and shoulders.
- ◆ Do not tense to the point of pain, but only enough for you to begin to feel and recognize the physical sensation of your muscles feeling tense.
- ◆ Hold the tension for a moment.
- ◆ Notice and experience the physical feelings of tension in your muscles.
- ◆ Now, slowly and gently begin to relax these muscles.
- ◆ Identify the effort you make to consciously relax these muscles, after you have felt and understood that they were tense.
- ◆ Make a note in your mind about the physical and emotional differences between tension and relaxation.
- ◆ Your breathing should still be slow, smooth and rhythmic.
- ◆ Now repeat this exercise by again gently tensing, holding and then releasing the muscles in your hands, forearms and shoulders, and recognizing the different physical and emotional feelings between tension and relaxation.
- ◆ Your breathing should still be slow, smooth and rhythmic.

Learning to recognize the physical and emotional differences between tension and relaxation will help you to begin halting stress and anxiety related symptoms before they get out of control.

- ◆ Much of the tension of the day is often stored in the muscles of our upper and lower back. Repeat this exercise by again gently tensing, holding and then releasing the muscles in your upper and lower back, by tensing your abdomen and rolling your shoulders slowly forward and inward.
- ◆ Again, do not tense to the point of pain, but only enough for you to begin to feel and recognize the physical sensation of your upper and lower back muscles feeling tense.
- ◆ Hold this tension for a moment.
- ◆ Notice and experience the physical feelings of tension in your back muscles.
- ◆ Now, slowly and gently begin to relax these muscles.
- ◆ Identify the effort you make to consciously relax these muscles, after you have felt and understood that they were tense.
- ◆ Make a note in your mind about the physical and emotional differences between tension and relaxation.
- ◆ Repeat this exercise again, slowly tensing, holding, and then relaxing the muscles of your upper and lower back, and noticing the differences between tension and relaxation.
- ◆ Your breathing should still be slow, smooth and rhythmic.
- ◆ Now begin by tensing the muscles in your legs and buttocks, by slowly and gently pulling your toes upwards, and tensing your calves and thighs, up to your buttocks.

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Section 3

Tolerating Anxiety AND Stress

Once mastered, you can consciously use these techniques to calm yourself, even in a crowded room, and no one will know, and you will feel better.

- ◆ Again, do not tense your muscles to the point of pain, but only to the point where you can recognize that these leg muscles are actually tense.
- ◆ Hold the tension for a moment.
- ◆ Identify and make a note in your mind about how it feels when these muscles are tense.
- ◆ Slowly relax these muscles, and notice the physical and emotional differences between tension and relaxation.
- ◆ Repeat this exercise again, tensing and releasing the muscles of your legs and buttocks, and maintain your slow, smooth and rhythmic breathing.
- ◆ Now focus on the muscles of your face; around the mouth, eyes, cheeks and brow, where much of the tension of the day is often stored.
- ◆ Maintain slow, smooth and rhythmic breathing.
- ◆ Pay close attention to how you feel when your muscles are tense.
- ◆ Identify the effort required to slowly and gently relax these muscles.
- ◆ Make the effort to recognize and understand the physical and emotional differences between muscle tension and relaxation.
- ◆ Now take a moment for yourself to completely relax your body and your mind. Visualize in your mind a picture that is pleasing and relaxing to you. This could be a remote island scene, or a sunny day, or your family playing happily together, or whatever makes you feel good.
- ◆ Take your time and fully experience the relaxing effects of your image.
- ◆ Repeat these exercises frequently, as often as you would like, learning to recognize the physical and emotional differences between tension and relaxation, and visualize your special place in your mind, again and again.
- ◆ The next time you are feeling stressed or anxious, you will be able to focus and consciously recognize the physical tension of your body, and you will have the skills and ability to consciously relax your muscles and consciously go to your peaceful picture, allowing yourself more freedom to work out your problems.

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USING SOLUTIONS to ANXIETY and STRESS

This book has taught you many ideas for reducing your anxiety and stress, but you must take healthy action and practice them and implement them into your life, or they will be useless.

We all already possess healthy Strengths, Abilities, Resources and Situational Supports that can help us to better cope with distressing situations. We just need to learn how to focus on and use them to our best advantage.

We now know all about Stress and Anxiety; about how it can turn into an endless cycle of painful experiences, both physically and emotionally. But how do we stop it?

There are two angles of attack against Stress and Anxiety: Pro-Active and Re-Active -- and both can and should be used for the greatest effect.

The *proactive* approach helps you to be better prepared for handling stress and anxiety producing situations, by drawing upon your specific strengths and resources, helping you to plan ahead.

- ✓ In the previous sections, you have learned to understand the impact values of different kinds of thoughts and images (positive and negative implants).
- ✓ You have learned to recognize the physical sensations that stress and anxiety can produce, and to use them as 'warning signs' to take healthy action.
- ✓ You have also hopefully learned that many if not most of the things you currently automatically do in response to your stress and anxiety generally do not help to either resolve the actual situations or reduce the symptoms of the anxiety, and may even make things worse.
- ✓ You have learned skills of Distress Tolerance Training, the difference between physical tension and relaxation, and how to consciously relax your muscles and visualize serene and peaceful pictures when feeling stressed or anxious.

Knowledge is power, and ALL of this newly gained knowledge will be very helpful to you for handling future stress and anxiety producing situations. But there is a little more.

What you need to do now is take an inventory of your 'Balancing Factors', such as Personal Strengths, Abilities and Resources, add in a few 'Situational Supports', and put all of your new knowledge together into a proactive planning package. Together with a few new skills, you will have all the proactive skills and abilities ready to be effectively reactive in situations, when you need to be.

Strengths are the internal, personal qualities you possess like being friendly, clean, brave, reverent, thoughtful, loyal, courteous, kind, dependable, punctual, creative, diligent, humorous, and so on. These personal qualities can do a lot more for you than just make you a swell person to be around, if you learn how to use them to your own advantage. *Start thinking about at least three of your own personal strengths. You have several!*

Abilities are the things that you can do or the skills you possess. Perhaps you have skills and abilities related to cooking, typing, analyzing, fixing things, parenting, teaching, driving, playing sports, or managing people, places and things. These abilities or skills can be useful to you in probably many more ways than you have imagined, if you are a little creative. *Start thinking about at least three of your best or favorite personal skills and abilities.*

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Learning to focus on and maximize your personal strengths that you already possess will help you to achieve greater success in all areas of your life.

Resources are external things that you either possess or could have access to if needed. Resources may include a home, car, phone, car-phone, computer, job, money, health insurance, education, personal scrapbook, hobby or collections, pet, and so on. *Start thinking about at least three of your greatest and most useful resources.*

Situational Supports are the people in your life that can help you, if you need them. These may include a spouse or significant other, parents, children, teachers, ministers, co-workers, bosses, neighbors, support group members or sponsor, or other friends. Some people are more helpful in certain situations than others, but most people are willing to do what they can, if only you ask. *Start thinking about at least three people in your life who could be supportive in a healthy way and help you through stressful situations, if you needed them.*

Now, really start thinking about how you can make all of these personal strengths, abilities, resources and situational supports work to their greatest advantage, for you, in times of anxiety and stress.

Consider this example: I am frequently stressed and anxious in slow or heavy traffic and in bad weather.

My Strengths:	I Am Humorous	I Am Diligent	I Am Creative
My Abilities:	I Can Teach	I Can Cook	I Can Sing
My Resources:	Reliable Car	Cell Phone	Puppy
My Supports:	Spouse	Best Friend	Minister

Be proactive and plan ahead for difficult situations by refining the effectiveness of the healthy things that you already know, and if what you know isn't working well, take the steps to learn something new that will work.

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Managing Stress & Anxiety

WORKSHEET (8)

This worksheet will help you to begin recognizing your existing personal strengths, abilities, resources and situation supports, to help you become proactive for the future and build self- confidence in anxiety producing situations.

READ and FOLLOW the directions, and be as specific and detailed as possible.

Following the descriptions given on the previous pages, and THINK carefully about your personal strengths, resources abilities, and situational support persons.

WRITE DOWN at least four (4) of each that you currently possess or have access to. When done, circle three (3) of the four that you will commit to trying to utilize the next time you are feeling stressed or anxious, and write down the phone numbers of the people you have selected next to their names.



STRENGTHS:

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)



ABILITIES:

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)



RESOURCES:

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)



SITUATIONAL SUPPORTS:

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

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USING WHAT YOU HAVE

Now comes the proactive part: learning to put the things you already possess to work FOR you, by planning and practicing healthy reactions and responses for the future.

**Be
creative
and
resourceful.**

If you are stuck in your car in the middle lane of the freeway, in rush-hour traffic, at a dead stop because of a hailing thunderstorm, how can the above items be blended together to be useful towards combating your stress and anxiety?

**Ask
other
people
what helps
them
through
difficult
situations.**

The first thing to do is to use your *strengths* (i.e. creativity, diligence, humor) and take inventory of your *resources* and healthy *options*.

☐ You know you are in a reliable car. You know you have a cell phone to use if you need to call a situational support person for help or just to talk to a reassuring voice, and you should not be afraid or embarrassed to do so.

☐ You can choose to practice the skills of Distress Tolerance Training and Therapeutic Relaxation, by taking several deep, smooth and rhythmic breaths, closing your eyes and thinking about your predetermined, peaceful replacement images. You can flex and relax your muscles, noticing the difference between tension and relaxation, and work yourself into a comfortable and relaxed state.

**It is
educational
and
less
distressing
to
Learn
from the
mistakes
of others,
than
from
your
own.**

☐ You can use your predetermined verbal distressing thought counters created in the previous worksheets, and repeat them again and again to yourself or even out loud. (Remember, you are not the only one in this traffic jam who is uncomfortable, so do not worry about what anyone might think of your taking to yourself. You'll probably never see them again anyway, and *you* are the healthy one who is taking positive steps to relieve misery.)

☐ You can pull out your drawings of peaceful relaxing scenes, or simply envision them in your mind. Focus on putting yourself into your predetermined picture, even in the middle of a thunderstorm. Instead of being the only person in a crowd on a sunny day with a cloud over their head, be the only person on a cloudy day with the sun shining on their head.

○ You can consciously choose to use this time productively and focus on other things. Create and write down a new recipe or song while you wait. You can call your office or spouse and discuss important or trivial grand plans, or just to say 'I Love You'.

○ You can make up silly jokes to tell at work or when you get home. "Hey, did you hear the one about the guy stuck in traffic at noon?" "All he had for lunch was a jam!" OR "He spent his time jamming to the radio!" (ha...ha... traffic jam ...ha...)

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Remember, while some outcomes may not be as peaceful and enjoyable as others, chances are very good that you will make it through most any situation, even if you find it extremely stressful and anxiety ridden.

◆ We just ran through a minimum of 6 (six) potential options for this one situation. The point is that you DO already have what you need to face most any situation. You already have Strengths, Resources and Options that you can choose to use in healthy ways to help you cope with distressing or uncomfortable situations.

It is useful and practical to plan ahead and practice all of these healthy options many times. Take the time to put yourself in a 'safe-place' and then mentally envision yourself making it through a distressing situation. Practice countering your worries and taking the appropriate healthy actions to make it through, before you end up there. That way you *know* you are well prepared, and you will do just fine, with minimal stress and discomfort.

All of these ideas and the following worksheet can further help you to be prepared for handling stressful or anxiety producing situations.

It is important to remember, however, that while some things will work for some people some of the time, and everything will not work for all people all of the time,

NONE of the ideas in this book will help you... if you do not try them.

You will actually probably have to try and practice most of the ideas in this book several times, again and again.

This is normal, and this is practical. They say that it takes at least 21 days to develop a habit (good or bad), and that's if you are only doing the 'new' thing and not trying to replace an 'old' thing.

So, be patient and diligent with these activities and ideas. It will take time, and you may falter, but that is okay and expected.

The most important thing to do is to *learn from your shortcomings and difficulties*. If the serene visual image you created doesn't quite work, refine it and try it again, instead of abandoning the idea all together. Do the same thing with your positive thought counters.

You will eventually develop a strategy of thoughts and images that do help to calm you, and your confidence will build, and your distressing symptoms will be reduced, and you will feel better.

It just takes time, patience, practice and motivation.

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This worksheet will help you to become more aware of how you Can Handle Stress and Anxiety, and help you to reduce your Anxiety by scaling situations into perspective.

READ and FOLLOW the directions, and be as specific and detailed as possible.

Describe the event, change or situation causing you stress or anxiety:

Identify and WRITE DOWN the *worst* possible outcomes to the situation you described above. Then, evaluate the *honest* likelihood of these specific outcomes coming true. Rate them on a scale from 1 - 5, (with 1 being the *least* likely, 5 being the *most* likely to come true.)

Then, Draw a line completely through those that *definitely won't* come true or *most likely won't* come true.



1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

5.)

6.)

7.)

People who *could* help me with these remaining situations, were they to become a reality:



Healthy Actions I *could* take to help myself cope with these remaining situations, were they to become a reality:

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More Helpful Hints:

Learning to use many of these techniques can help make the 'getting through' less painful.

- Write down your Positive Self-Implant Thoughts on index cards, and tape them where you can see them on the dashboard in your car, on your desk, to the bathroom mirror, on the refrigerator, and anywhere else that you frequent.
- Repeat these truth-based thoughts to yourself, out loud, at least three times a day, even when you are not currently feeling stressed or anxious.
- Get a 'Dry Erase' marker and write down your Positive Thoughts or draw out your Relaxing Images on your bathroom mirror. You can still see to brush your teeth and dry your hair, and you can clean it off with a tissue.
- Pick a 'Theme Song', learn all the words, and sing it (out loud if possible, but to yourself is okay too) whenever you begin feeling stressed or anxious. Pick a song that is uplifting or happy in lyric, has a good beat, and that you can hum anywhere. One that has your own name it is even better, and if there isn't one that you know of, write one. It doesn't have to be fancy, it just needs to say things that you like to hear.
- Take care of yourself. Make sure that you get enough quality sleep. Exercise a little, every day, even if only enough to get your blood pumping. Eat three healthy meals a day, and avoid junky snacks that can affect your normal body functioning. (A stressed and anxious person probably doesn't need to be wired on sugar and caffeine.)
- In addition to developing peaceful and serene thoughts and images in your mind and on paper, do your best to create such a real-life space, and enjoy it at least once a week if not every day. You may only get 30 minutes or an hour of this vacation time, but make it and use it. It will help to rejuvenate all of your senses.

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MORE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES FROM PEACHTREE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION, INC.

PeachTree offers numerous Training Seminars that teach practical and effective intervention and assessment strategies on issues of substance abuse, personality disorders, depression, family issues, anger and violence, professional ethics, brief therapy techniques... and more. Training topics and Uplifting KeyNote subjects can be developed and customized to meet the needs of your professional group.

CLIENT AND PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES:

The Nongard Strengths and Resources Inventory (NSRI)

A one page self-report questionnaire, focusing on identification of client strengths and resources. This is a practical general assessment tool, useful for strategizing therapeutic intervention starting points, based on the adult and adolescent client's personal attributes, resources and abilities.

The Nongard Substance Addiction Screening (NSAS)

A self-report preliminary addiction screening tool, with both adult and adolescent versions. The NSAS's format is practical and easy to administer, complete, score and interpret, and it follows the DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for Substance Dependency.

The Nongard Depression Index (NDI)

A self-report preliminary screening tool for depression, with both adult and adolescent versions. The simple "survey" format encourages honesty, and the content follows the DSM-IV criteria for Major Depression.

The Nongard Couple's Conflict Questionnaire (NCCQ)

This self-report screening tool covers sixteen areas of life and is useful for both Individual and Couple's counseling settings. Clients are asked to mark statements that they identify with, and also to mark statement they feel their partner would relate to, if asked. Great for quickly identifying presenting problems of relationship difficulties.

The First Three Steps... A Guide for Recovery Utilizing the AA and NA Texts

This workbook is designed as a tool to assist in the recovery of both singularly and dually-addicted adults and adolescents, and incorporates both AA and NA text readings. It is written in a modern, simple language for the benefit of all populations, and may be especially useful for adolescents, young adults, and those who may be developmentally challenged.

The Family Peace and Sanity Treaty

This workbook is similar on the surface to common 'family contracts', yet it goes much further to instill responsibility and respect for authority by helping parents to thoroughly address and plan strategies step-by-step for handling all aspects of a young person's life, from curfews to school to attitude to chores to spiritual awareness, etc., and is written in a relaxed, understanding, 'there is hope' manner.

Getting Along... A Guide for Healthy Interactions with Others

This workbook goes beyond simple communication strategies and addresses both verbal and non-verbal expression patterns, listening skills, and altering automatic or reactionary behaviors. *Getting Along* is crammed with worksheet assignments designed to increase awareness, create options and change both unhealthy habitual and intentional behaviors that cause distress in all forms of relationships.

Therapeutic Relaxation

This 2-Program, 4-track CD guides the listener through a series of Progressive Muscle Relaxation techniques, Breathing Exercises, and Creative Visualization. Not designed to put the listener to sleep, but to teach the listener how to recognize their physical stress and how to actively relax, with or without the cassettes. Each program has both male and female voice tracks, for client preference, and the introductory program has no background sounds, while the second has calming ocean background sounds from the North Padre Island National Seashore.

And More!

Please contact PeachTree Professional Education, Inc. at (800) 390-9536 or visit our website at www.FastCEUs.com for further information.

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