

A FREE PRACTICE FROM RIVERCALM

Anxiety

A short practice for when fighting it stops working.

BEFORE YOU START

What anxiety is, in short.

Anxiety is a threat-detection system doing its job. It scans, predicts and gets you ready for something that might go wrong. It becomes a problem when it fires too easily, too strongly or too often.

You feel it in your body: a tight chest, a fast heart, shallow breathing, a stomach that won't settle. And you notice it in your thoughts: imagining the worst, guessing what others think of you, scanning for danger. Your mind reads these signals as proof that something must be wrong. That feels like an even bigger threat, which brings more anxiety, and the loop closes.

Often a second wave follows: the fear of the fear, the frustration at being like this again, the effort of hiding it before anyone notices. When you fight anxiety, your brain starts treating the anxiety itself as the danger. You end up anxious about being anxious, and that can leave you feeling helpless.

The first wave is hard to control. The second one is where you have room to work, because it grows mostly out of the fight.

Being afraid of something truly dangerous is normal and healthy. But many situations only feel terrifying in our minds; in reality they're far less dangerous. When you act anyway, with the anxiety still there, you show your brain that the danger it predicted wasn't so dangerous after all.

So: three things to practice, and one week to try them in.

A NOTE FIRST

Anxiety is a complex response with many possible causes, including medical ones. To understand the full picture, get a thorough assessment from a mental health professional.

THE PRACTICE

Three things, in this order.

01 Name it without alarm

Say what's happening, plainly: *"My heart is racing"* or *"I'm imagining the worst"*, instead of *"something is wrong."* The words you choose tell your body how much danger you're in.

Write the sentence you'll use:

02 Let the feeling stay

Naming it is an observation. This step is giving yourself permission, kindly: *"Yes, I'm anxious, and it's hard."* Try to find gentle words for yourself, and if that's hard, be gentle about not being gentle.

If you can, be specific: *"Yes, this project is stressing me a lot."* Sometimes you'll just feel anxious in general, and it's okay not to know why in that moment.

What's driving your anxiety right now, and can you let it be there?

03 Act on what you can

Look at what you can and can't control in what's making you anxious. Make a plan or find resources for what can change, and look for ways to accept what can't. You can't change what a coworker thinks of you, for example, but you can have a conversation to clear things up.

When that isn't possible, it can help to interrupt the pattern and give your mind something else: a task, or something you actually enjoy. Cleaning the kitchen. Playing a video game. Sometimes the best way through anxiety is to stop feeding it and put your attention on something that matters to you, with the anxiety still there.

What can you act on, and what can you let go of?

ONE WEEK

Small and often beats big and once.

Fill in a row on the days you notice it. Skip the days you don't. Blank rows are part of the design.

DAY	WHAT SET IT OFF	WHAT I'D NORMALLY DO	WHAT I DID INSTEAD
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

That's it.

If you only take one thing from these pages, take the third one, act on what you can.

If you'd like, write to me at info@rivercalm.life and let me know how this worksheet worked for you.



— San

What's next?

Give the practice one week before you decide whether it works. Small steps, repeated, are what change things.

And if you'd like to go further:

- My audio series feeling flooded, for when your emotions feel like the enemy: rivercalm.life/feeling-flooded
- Therapy or coaching with me, in English, Spanish or German: rivercalm.life/#sessions

These pages are educational and can't replace therapy or medical care. If you're struggling with strong or long-lasting symptoms, please reach out to a mental health professional.