

STEPS TO MANAGE ANXIETY (Bridge of Hope)

I want to leave these worries behind, I desire peace of mind from God. There are commonly three stages in developing an anxious reaction: the Activating Event (A) Thoughts and Beliefs (B), which are often so automatic that we miss them; and Consequences (C), which are usually emotions and behaviour. To change our anxiety, we can Dispute (D) the thoughts and beliefs or change our behaviour.

A-Activating Event:

1. Identify what it is that makes you anxious. This could be a particular event, place or thing, e.g. someone yelling at you or going out into a public place: several things; or you may experience a generalised feeling of anxiety.

B-Beliefs and automatic thoughts

2. Tune in carefully to your thought patterns each time you are anxious. Ask yourself what thoughts / messages you are giving yourself. How are these beliefs unhelpful in your daily life?

3. What do these thoughts tell you about your core beliefs – the way you see the world? These beliefs can give you the greatest clues about why you are anxious.

C–Consequences: emotions and behaviour:

4. Learn to recognise the early signs of anxiety: e.g. heart racing, sweaty palms, faintness, trembling, dizziness etc.

5. How are your emotions linked to your behaviour? e.g. avoiding places where you feel anxious?

D–Dispute beliefs and change behaviour:

6. Remind yourself that you are anxious because of the beliefs and thoughts you have about the object / event, not because of the object / event itself.

7. Practice relaxation / breathing / mindfulness and prayer to calm your mind and body.

8.Practice acceptance of what you can't change and focus on the "here and now". Try not to think about past events or worry about the future. If you do, you will stress yourself but you will not change anything.

9.Play "devil's advocate." What is the worst thing that could happen? Would you survive it and live to tell the tale? Often, worrying about the worst thing is worse than actually going through it.

10.Think about any unhelpful beliefs you have identified.

a. Are these beliefs true?

Look for evidence that they are NOT true.

b. What are other, more helpful ways of looking at the same situation?

11.Look for evidence of where the object / event has been linked with a good outcome.

12.You will have a tendency to avoid situations where you get anxious. Try to put yourself in these situations, practice these disputing techniques and make a note of all the times that you have a good outcome.