

# Anxiety Self-Care Plan: What Is My Body Responding To?

**Read the article first.** This worksheet accompanies [Understanding Anxiety Is Only the Beginning | The Gap Between Insight and Action](#) at ThoughtsFromATherapist.com, which explains the radio, why insight quiets the commentary without lowering the cortisol, and what happens when the radio comes back. Search “insight and action” on the site to find it.

Anxiety is a story, and it is also adrenaline, cortisol, and an activated nervous system. Understanding changes our relationship to anxiety. Action changes the conditions that keep producing it. This sheet moves from the first task to the second: hear the radio, ask what the body is responding to, pick one or two places to begin, and write them into a week. A few words per space is enough.

## THE FIRST TASK

### The radio

Anxiety plays in the background like a station. We do not have to smash the radio or turn it off. We stop mistaking the broadcast for reality, and the station can keep playing while we decide whether it deserves our attention.

## THE QUESTION SHIFTS

### What the body is responding to

The question stops being why am I anxious and becomes what is my nervous system responding to. We look at the conditions of a life: inflammation, sleep, movement, recovery, breath and attention, nature, the existential, the relational, and how much stimulation we live with.

*I feel anxious, and the source could be any number of things.*

*Where am I, one to ten, with sleep? With movement?*

## THE SECOND TASK

### Small, concrete, written

One or two areas, a few starting places in each, written into a calendar. A written plan takes the load of remembering and choosing off a system we are trying to settle. Every starting place here is a place to begin, not a prescription.

## THE RADIO COMES BACK

### Meeting our own imperfect efforts

We will not be consistent, and once there is a list, the list becomes a source of stress. The station gets loudest when we move into action. We return to the first task, without treating the return as failure.

## A WORKED EXAMPLE

### THE RADIO

I feel anxious, so something is wrong with my relationship. She's upset with me.

### OTHER SOURCES

A stressful text from work an hour ago, and my system never settled. Short on sleep. No movement, no time outside.

### WHAT HAPPENED

Carrying that state, I caught a small expression on her face and read it as evidence. A story built on a physiological state that had nothing to do with her.

### STARTING PLACES

A consistent bedtime. A fifteen-minute walk most days. Getting outside, even briefly.

### THE RADIO, LATER

“I didn't meditate when I said I would. I played badminton once and I don't even know if I like it.”

### WHAT I DID

Cleaned up my eating and took a few walks this month.

*These are starting places, not medical advice. Questions about sleep, inflammation, an old injury, or any new physical practice belong with a doctor or another qualified professional.*

## The radio, and the conditions under it

*First separate from the station. Then look at what the body might be responding to.*

### WHAT THE RADIO IS SAYING TODAY

The station, in its own words. I write it down without arguing with it.

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How loud is it? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### OTHER THINGS MY BODY MIGHT BE RESPONDING TO

*Something eaten, a night of poor sleep, a day without moving, a message that never settled. Name three.*

ONE:

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TWO:

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THREE:

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### WHERE AM I WITH EACH, ONE TO TEN?

Ten means well tended. These are a place to stand and something to watch, not a score.

**Inflammation.** Food, alcohol and sugar, an old injury, the accumulated load

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Sleep.** Falling asleep, staying asleep, waking rested

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Movement.** Most days, in some form

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Recovery.** Rest with no agenda, protected time with no input

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Breath and attention.** Practicing on ordinary days, not only hard ones

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Nature.** Getting outside, and longer immersion when I can

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**The existential.** Living close to what I value, something chosen rather than consumed

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**The relational.** Connection, and someone who sees something true

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Stimulation.** Enough engagement to stay alive to my life, enough rest from it

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### THE ONE OR TWO I WILL START WITH

*Choose the lowest, or the one that would make the others easier. Movement reaches inflammation, nature, and sleep at once.*

FIRST:

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SECOND (OPTIONAL):

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WHY THESE:

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## Starting places

Check two or three under the areas chosen on page two, and leave the rest. The line under each is for our own.

### INFLAMMATION

The load the body carries

- ☐ Fewer highly processed and packaged foods
- ☐ Noticing whether alcohol or sugar shifts my baseline
- ☐ Tending to an old injury: bodywork, acupuncture

### SLEEP

A door back into rest

- ☐ Reading before bed instead of a screen
- ☐ A consistent bedtime
- ☐ A cooler, darker room

### MOVEMENT

Keeping the system in rhythm

- ☐ A fifteen-minute walk most days
- ☐ Strength work a couple of times a week
- ☐ A morning stretch

### RECOVERY

Unloading

- ☐ A genuine rest day, with no agenda
- ☐ Sauna, a hot bath, or time in the sun
- ☐ Protected time with no feed and no screen

### BREATH AND ATTENTION

Practice before it is needed

- ☐ A few minutes following the breath, returning each time the mind wanders
- ☐ In for four, out for six, to down-regulate
- ☐ Practicing on ordinary days, not only hard ones

### NATURE

Finding rhythm again

- ☐ Getting outside each day, even briefly
- ☐ One longer immersion: a hike, a full day, a weekend

### THE EXISTENTIAL

Chosen, not consumed

- ☐ Naming one value, and one place I am out of step with it
- ☐ Something I do for its own sake: guitar, pottery, running, writing

### THE RELATIONAL

A low fire that never goes out

- ☐ Reaching out to one person this week
- ☐ Letting someone see something true

### STIMULATION

The question of enough

- ☐ Naming what enough looks like for me this week
- ☐ Noticing when flow becomes depletion, and stopping there
- ☐ Protecting recovery after long stretches of focus

## The week, written down

*The decision is made once, here, so the mind stops rehearsing it. What, and when.*

DAY ONE

Monday

DAY TWO

Tuesday

DAY THREE

Wednesday

DAY FOUR

Thursday

DAY FIVE

Friday

DAY SIX

Saturday

DAY SEVEN

Sunday

### WHEN THE RADIO COMES BACK

*At the end of the week. The station will have something to say about how the plan went. Write both, side by side.*

WHAT IS THE STATION SAYING NOW?

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WHAT DID I ACTUALLY DO?

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WHO COULD I TELL, OR WHAT COULD I RETURN TO, SO THE STATION STOPS DECIDING THE NEXT WEEK?

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*Insight is not the first step that gives way to action. It is the ground we keep returning to so action remains possible.*