

What if?

The fear of something
bad happening

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Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for anyone who wants to better understand what excessive worry is, the ways it manifests itself, and when it becomes difficult to manage. Here you will see the ways this worry can appear in your daily life, how to distinguish this feeling from ordinary planning or natural caution, and learn some practical ways to prevent, cope with, and seek professional support.

What is this feeling?

You know when you feel a tightness in your chest, a sense of unease, as if something bad were about to happen even without a real reason?

This type of fear is common in people with anxiety and can appear **unexpectedly**, anywhere, pulling you away from what you were doing.

If this feeling occurs most days for at least six months, it may be a sign of **Generalized Anxiety Disorder**.



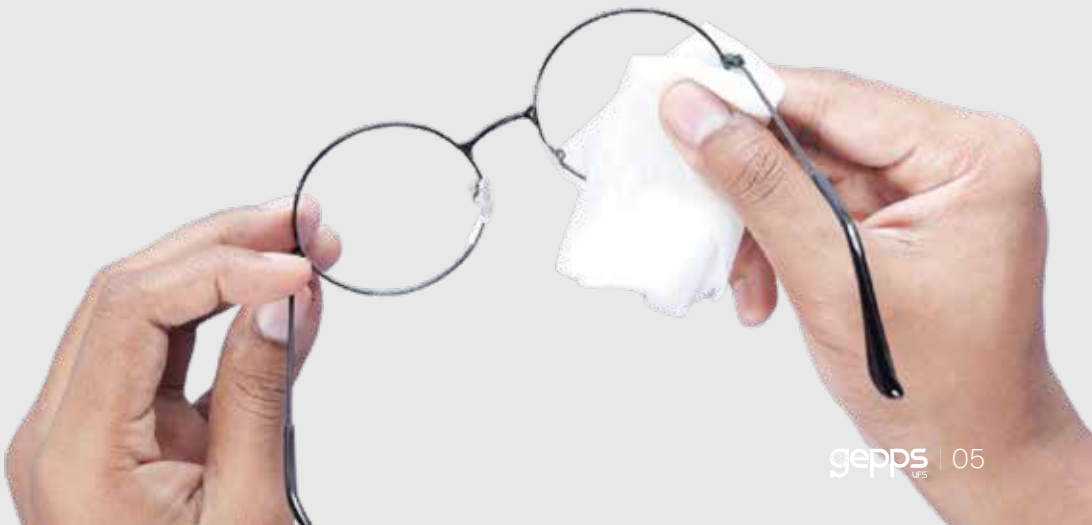
How does anxiety distort our perception of reality?

Think of your mind, when it's anxious, as a foggy lens.

It distorts the image, making everything seem more confusing, more dangerous, and more urgent than it really is.

REALITY

That's why negative thoughts come through more strongly, and that's where so-called cognitive distortions arise—distorted ways of interpreting reality.





And the best part? This symptom can be managed!

In the following pages, you'll learn strategies for dealing with two common types of thoughts that fuel this fear:



“What if...?” When the mind creates catastrophic scenarios.

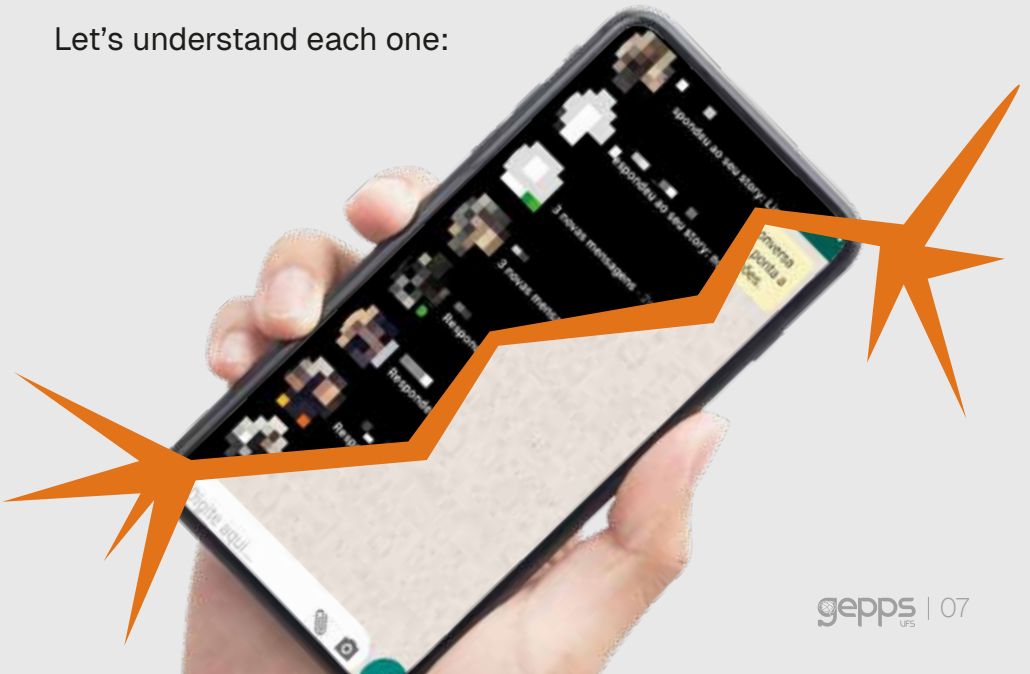


Predicting the future. When you believe that something bad is bound to happen.

To make it easier, think of these distortions as two apps that opened on their own in your head.

They drain your energy, your focus, and your calm, and you didn't even realize you could close them.

Let's understand each one:



“What if...?”

When the mind becomes a screenwriter of tragedies.

This thought pattern is like having an **internal screenwriter who specializes only in creating bad endings.**

Even if the chance is minimal, your mind insists on imagining the worst.

Why does this happen?

Because your anxious brain tries to predict every possible scenario as a way to “protect itself.”

But in practice, this only increases fear and stress.

“What if I embarrass myself?”

“What if I can’t do it?”

“What if everything goes wrong?”



Predicting the Future

When you feel like the screenwriter

Predicting the future is a thought pattern in which you imagine that something bad is going to happen, even without having concrete evidence for it. You anticipate failures or problems, usually in a negative way, without considering other possibilities.

This is when you act as if you have the “power” to predict the future, but only to imagine bad outcomes.

Your mind starts narrating:

“I know it’s going to go wrong.”

“It won’t work.”

“It’s going to be a disaster.”

Even without any evidence.

And how does this affect you?

- It increases anxiety.
- It reduces confidence.
- It makes you avoid important situations.
- It impairs your performance

Negative Predictions Test

Over the next week, write down your predictions related to negative thoughts and worries, such as: “I’ll lose focus,” “I won’t have anything to talk about,” or “I’ll have trouble sleeping.” At the end of the week, review your notes and compare them with what actually happened.



I predict that ... will happen



I predict that ... will not happen



Actual result



Productive and Unproductive Worries

Productive

These are the ones that actually help you take action.

Example: “I need to check the tire before traveling.”



Unproductive

These are the ones that just drain your energy.

Example: “What if the plane crashes?”

Knowing which category your worry falls into is already half the battle in reducing anxiety.

And how do you classify them?

We can ask ourselves: if the outcome of this worry brings you some benefit—for example, if worrying about car breakdowns leads you to keep up with maintenance—that’s a positive result stemming from a productive worry.

If the worry brings you more harm than good—for example, if you stop flying and miss out on opportunities because of it—that worry can be considered unproductive, since it leads to a negative outcome.

At some point, we all worry about something. What matters is distinguishing whether your worry is productive or not. A productive worry leads to concrete action and is based on something plausible, with a real chance of happening. An unproductive worry, on the other hand, occurs when you fixate on remote possibilities, focusing on what could go wrong, even if the probability is very low.

Write down your current worry here:

Is there a very small chance of this happening?

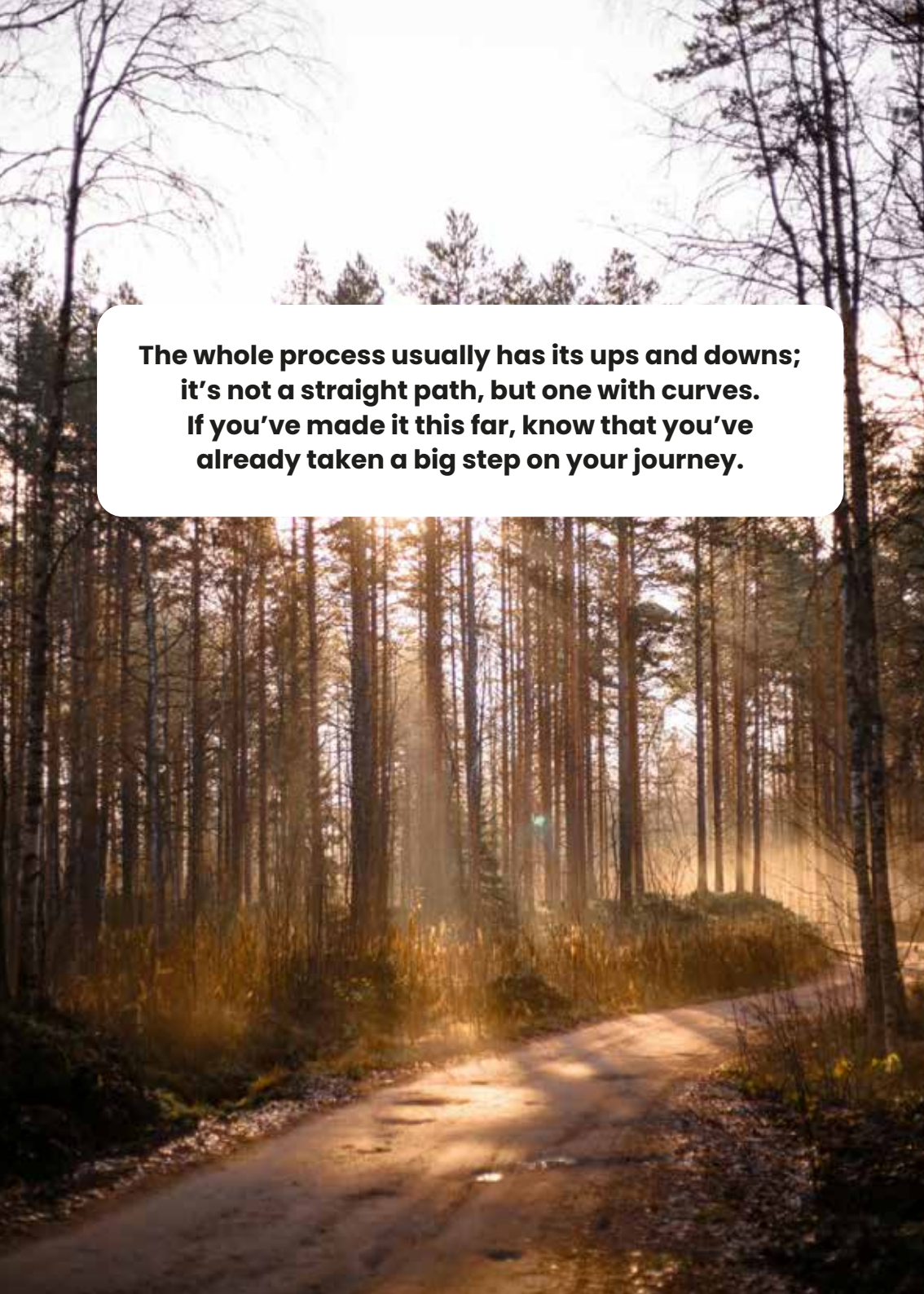
On a scale of 0 to 100%, how much do you believe in it?

What emotions come with this thought?

Is this a productive or unproductive worry?

What specific actions can I take?

By applying this technique, you can tell the difference between worries that are actually helpful and those that just cause anxiety without offering solutions.

A dirt path winds through a forest of tall, thin trees. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a warm, golden glow. The path is slightly curved and leads into the distance. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting late autumn or winter. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and contemplative.

The whole process usually has its ups and downs; it's not a straight path, but one with curves. If you've made it this far, know that you've already taken a big step on your journey.

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