

Restlessness

When the body and mind need to relax



Table of Contents

03

Who is this booklet for?

04

Excessive agitation

06

On Constant Alert
Hypervigilance

08

Diaphragmatic breathing

11

Dealing with the unpredictable

12

What else can I do?

15


Bibliography

Who is this booklet for?

Have you ever felt very restless? As if you couldn't even sit still in one place? Then this booklet is for you! Here you'll learn about this symptom and find out what you can do to cope with it.

Excessive restlessness

Constantly changing positions, getting up repeatedly, swinging your legs or hands... Has this ever happened to you? These behaviors can occur when anxiety puts the body on constant alert, as if you need to be ready to act, even without a real reason.



At home, while trying to rest or relax by watching a movie, a person gets up repeatedly, paces back and forth, or can't find a comfortable position. If this happens frequently, it can interfere with rest, concentration, and daily activities.

These behaviors show that anxiety affects both thoughts and the body, leaving the person in constant motion, as if it were impossible to **take a break**.

But did you know that this symptom can be managed?

Anxious people often have two types of thoughts that increase this agitation: **hypervigilance** and **intolerance of uncertainty**. The good news is that we can change the way we think.



First...

In the following pages, you'll see ways to deal with these thoughts. But let's start by understanding what **hypervigilance** is and how it affects the way you see the world.

On Constant Alert

Hypervigilance is understood as a type of thinking that keeps a person in a **constant state of alert** to notice possible threats or signs of danger in the environment.

Although taking care of ourselves is important, in **hypervigilance**, a person places **much greater weight on risk** and **much less importance on their sense of safety**. They “notice” negative things more frequently or interpret ordinary situations as threatening.

This pattern leads the person to **continuously monitor** their surroundings, remaining in a state of **physical and emotional tension**, as if they were always on the brink of imminent danger. This increases anxiety and makes it difficult to relax.



In other words,

Hypervigilance is when the mind is **“on high alert”** all the time, as if always expecting something bad to happen. It’s as if the brain were a faulty fire alarm that’s always going off, even when there’s just a single candle lit.

As a result, the person feels constantly **tense, worried, and has trouble resting.**

For example,

A person who, even in a safe place, **keeps looking around** and imagining that someone might mug them or that something bad might happen to them and that they have to **be prepared.**



Have you ever experienced something like this?

Training your breathing can help!

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Living in a state of alertness is exhausting for the body and mind. Hypervigilance keeps our attention constantly focused on **potential threats**, making it **difficult to relax and focus on the present**.

To redirect your attention and calm your mind, a simple and effective technique is **diaphragmatic breathing**. It involves **breathing slowly, deeply, and mindfully**, using the diaphragm (a muscle located in the abdominal region).

Below, you'll find a step-by-step guide to practicing diaphragmatic breathing.

Remember: like any skill, it requires practice and patience. Over time, it will become easier and easier to breathe this way.

Shall we begin?



- 1** **Get comfortable** Sit or lie down in a **comfortable position**.
- 2** **Breathe in** Place one hand on your belly and inhale slowly through your nose, **counting to three**, while feeling your abdomen expand like a **balloon**.
- 3** **Exhale and relax** Then, exhale slowly, counting to five, and repeat words like **“relax”** or **“calm down”** in your mind.
- 4** **Repetitions** Maintain a pace of **10 to 12 breaths per minute**, focusing on the movement of your belly and the sensation of air moving in and out of your lungs.
- 5** **Focus** If your mind wanders, bring your focus back to your breathing without judging yourself.

With **daily practice**, this technique helps bring your **focus to the present moment** and reduce anxiety.

Dealing with the Unpredictable

Another type of thought is **Intolerance of Uncertainty**. It arises when a person tends to perceive **situations where the outcome is unknown or uncontrollable** as **threatening**.

Thoughts like “**What if something goes wrong?**”—when frequent—lead to excessive worry. When the idea of uncertainty is seen as dangerous, the mind goes into a state of alert, causing anxiety and agitation.

In other words,

People who have difficulty dealing with uncertainty usually want to have all the answers before acting, avoid making decisions for fear of making mistakes, and/or overplan in an attempt **to control** every detail.

For example,

Upon receiving an unusual email, the person asks others if they've received a similar email, imagines bad things happening, plans what to do before even knowing what the email is about, and tries **to be prepared for every possible situation**.



What to do?

In real life, there will always be things we cannot control. Recognizing this helps us better manage our anxiety. The good news is that we can consciously reflect on this using the **“What can I still do?”** technique.

It involves assessing **what is within your control** and **the possibilities for action** based on the question: **“What can I still do, even without all the answers?”** The idea is to determine what you can do in the face of the situation, **even without knowing the outcome.**

Guidelines

- 1 Notice the anxious thought**, for example: “What if I don’t get the result I hope for (the job opening, for example)?”
- 2 Write down the consequences** you believe would occur if your worry were to come true.
- 3 Ask yourself:** “What can I still do, even without having all the answers?”
- 4 List possible actions, such as:** “I can look for new opportunities,” “I can talk to someone,” “I can apply for new jobs.”
- 5** Note down what would actually be **impossible to do.**
- 6 Choose a feasible action and take it:** The focus isn’t on solving everything, but on **acting in the present.**
- 7** With each uncertainty, **ask yourself again:** “What can I still do right now, even without having all the answers?”

This reflection helps you realize that, even though difficulties may arise, there are still ways to move forward.

If you’re on a computer or phone, you can use the attached form as a template!



Small actions can lead to big gains

Learning to **change our way of thinking** is an exercise we need to put into practice **every day**. After reading the content of this booklet, you have more tools to deal with anxiety when it arises. You've learned the techniques **“Diaphragmatic Breathing”** and **“What can I still do?”** Practice them whenever you feel on edge and need to relax. **You'll be able to take action and get the rest you need!**



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