

LIVING WELL

— with Kaitlin —

Living Well with Anxiety A GUIDED MINI WORKBOOK



Welcome!



Hi and welcome! I am Kaitlin Soule, a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who specializes in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. I help people to do the work of healing and growth when living with anxiety, depression, OCD, navigating life transitions, and dealing with trauma.

My overarching goal is to help my clients gain the skills and tools they need to change their life for the better. I believe that therapy should produce real change and want my clients to get to a place where they feel confident enough to act as their own "therapist/coach" when future life-challenges arise.

This guided mini-workbook is an example of the kinds of tangible and action-oriented tools I offer to my clients as we learn to live well with real-life challenges, such as anxiety. However, this workbook is not intended to take the place of therapy.

If you have questions about this workbook or my services, please do not hesitate to reach out at kaitlin@petalumacbt.org.

Thank you and wishing you well!

Kaitlin

LW
WK

Finding our "why"

Living Well with Anxiety

Use the space below to reflect on how your life might look different without your current level of anxiety.

What will you have more of?

How will your world get bigger?

If you could wave a magic wand and take away your need to be certain, perfect, or in control, what would there be more space for?

Finding the truth when it comes to anxiety...

Living Well with Anxiety

The five truth-bombs you need to consider:

1

Anxiety is a super power...we all have it, and we all need it to survive. We can not get rid of it completely, nor would we want to. It's primitive and protective, and we need it. The goal to "get rid" of anxiety is flawed..let's shift our goal to "learning to live well with worry."

2

Some of us have more anxiety than others...due to biological or environmental factors or past traumatic events, some people experience more "false alarms," than others. In other words, the brain hears the sound of the alarm and assumes it's a real fire opposed to burnt popcorn!

3

The more we resist it, the more it will persist...that sucks, I know. But it's true, the more we push back on our anxiety, or try and avoid it, or distract it, or numb it away, the stronger our anxious thoughts and feeling become. This is because the problem isn't anxiety itself (remember? it's a super power!) but it's our relationship with it that's problematic. So, we need to work on shifting our mindset from resistance to welcoming!

4

Welcoming anxiety is a crucial part of healing our relationship with worry...it means we let it come on in. We declare "Anxiety, I've got the drivers seat, you can come along, but you're sitting shot gun today." Welcoming is a bold posture...when our anxiety gets big, we get bigger!

5

Healing our relationship with anxiety takes time! You know this already, but you didn't learn to crawl, walk, or do anything else that abilities great at over night. Our mental health, just like our physical health and our abilities is reliant upon our willingness to practice the skills, and to get back up when we fall down, or get off track. Be as gentle with yourself as you would a toddler learning to walk...shaming and blaming yourself will keep you stuck and in pain.

Finding the truth when it comes to anxiety...

Living Well with Anxiety

Reflection Activity

1

If anxiety is a super power, how is your anxiety serving you?

2

What are some factors that lead to your anxiety?

3

What would help you shift your mindset to welcoming anxiety?

4

How can you get bigger than your anxiety?

5

What one thing will you try tomorrow to help you welcome anxiety?

Practical ways to practice welcoming...

Living Well with Anxiety

Seek out uncertainty: "Not knowing for sure," is often the underlying source of our big worries. Here's the thing though, uncertainty in life IS the only thing that's certain. So, if we can get a bit more used to, or comfortable with, uncertainty we will experience less intense feelings of distress when life throws all the things our way. Try taking a different route to work, switching up your morning routine, learning a new skill, or reaching out to somebody you haven't in a long time. Write one thing you'll commit to trying below:

Get comfortable with the uncomfortable: When something brings up big feelings (a hard conversation, an awkward circumstance, or physical discomfort) see if you can sit with it just a bit longer. Write one thing you'll commit to trying below:

Practical ways to practice welcoming...

Living Well with Anxiety

Practice Presence: If you're reading this, you likely struggle with anxiety...which means I would be the 100th person in the past month to tell you to "just meditate...or breathe." So, let me come at this whole mindfulness thing a bit differently and tell you the truth; mindfulness alone will not take away your anxiety. BUT, mindfulness (breath-work or meditation for example) can give us the skills we need to get some space from our anxious thoughts. When we learn to be right where our feet are, or to be present focused we don't get so caught up to our past or future oriented thoughts. When we aren't in the grips our brains anxious chatter, we are more free to live a meaningful life. Write one thing you'll commit to trying below:

What changes are you willing to try?

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If you heard anything in my messaging, I hope it's that improving mental and emotional health takes practice and willingness...and you are worth both of those things and so much more.

What changes are you willing to make today?

What is one welcoming practice you could put into place tomorrow?

If you keep up with welcoming practices, what do you see yourself coping better with in a month from now? A year from now?



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