



THE CARD SYSTEM

FOR COPING WITH FEARS AND ANXIETY

Everyone feels anxious or afraid sometimes, but there are things you can do to reduce your fear and anxiety. The CARD System (Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract) provides groups of strategies that you can play to cope with stressful situations. Originally used to help reduce fear and pain from medical procedures, CARD can also be used in situations that cause fear or anxiety. Playing your CARDS will give you strategies to help you with fear and anxiety.

COMFORT: Having negative thoughts and feelings is normal, and they usually go away over time. Try to be courageous and learn to be the 'boss' of your own worry.

ASK: Talk to someone you trust, such as a family member, friend or health-care provider. Ask them questions about your worries and how they can help you feel better.

RELAX: Be patient with yourself and do activities to keep yourself calm and relaxed.

DISTRACT: Try to keep normal routines and limit the amount of time you spend focusing on whatever is making you anxious or afraid.



SUGGESTIONS FOR PLAYING YOUR CARDS

COMFORT

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- Validate your thoughts and feelings (“It’s normal to be anxious and afraid sometimes.”)
- Think about what you can do to cope with anxiety and fear.
- Create a comfortable environment for yourself.
- Create daily routines that give you predictability and control.
- Do activities that you find calming, such as reading or solving puzzles.
- Empower yourself (“I am stronger than I feel”)
- Avoid focusing on negative thoughts and feelings.
- Be mindful of the conversations you have with family or friends.
- Be mindful of your media/tv choices and their impact on you.

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ASK QUESTIONS

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- Talk to someone you trust. Ask them about your worries and ways to feel better:
 - › Do other people feel this way?
 - › How do other people deal with these types of feelings?
 - › How can I fall asleep easier at bedtime?
 - › How do I keep a regular routine when I feel this way?

A

RELAX

R

- Do things that you enjoy to help you feel more secure and connected.
- Practice taking deep belly breaths.
- Listen to a mindfulness or relaxation activity.
- Practice positive self-talk (“This may be hard, but I can get through it!”).
- Practice being grateful (Think of 5 things you are grateful for while brushing your teeth).
- Be physically active. This is important to help us relax (playing catch, stretching, biking, walking).
- Be flexible and adjust expectations if needed.

R

DISTRACT

D

- Spend time doing and talking about things that are important to you such as sports, dancing, or art.
- Go for a walk or bike ride and pay attention to what you see, smell, hear and feel.
- Play games.
- Watch movies.
- Listen to your favourite music.
- Read books.
- Colour, draw, do crafts, scrapbook.
- Work on puzzles.

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HOW WILL YOU PLAY YOUR CARDS?

**HOW WILL YOU
COMFORT YOURSELF?**

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**WHAT WILL
YOU ASK?**

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**WHAT WILL YOU
DO TO RELAX?**

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**HOW WILL YOU
DISTRACT YOURSELF?**

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