

LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

Your guide in wellness and mental health

Tense Muscles & Sweaty Palms: Addressing the Thoughts and Sensations of Anxiety

Knotted stomach, dizziness, jitters, constant fatigue... Do any of these sensations sound familiar? In absence of a medical problem, these sensations can be a sign of anxiety. If these are familiar to you, you know they can be uncomfortable. They can make us feel like our anxiety is visible to everyone and make us want to isolate ourselves. But you are not alone in this experience - over 90% of individuals experiencing anxiety will experience physical sensations. This discomfort can lead people to try to do *anything to get rid of that sensation*. However, the hacks and unhelpful coping tactics often leave us stuck in the long run because it does not target the actual cause of our anxiety: our thoughts.



How Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Addresses Anxiety

CBT focuses on changing thoughts and behaviors to get past anxiety. CBT shows it is our thoughts that lead to our emotions and along with the impulses and physical sensations. Even though it can appear these sensations are coming out of nowhere, it is helpful to step back and notice what thoughts come before those sensations. Identifying thoughts leading to our anxiety is a skill that can be improved upon over time. And once you're able to identify your thoughts, you can start to change them. Let's talk about how we might do this.

At Learn to Live, we help people use Thought Inspection to identify our thoughts and ask ourselves questions that might challenge the truth behind them. Imagine you have an important presentation at work, and you notice muscle tension and an upset stomach. When you take a moment to step back, you notice thoughts like "What if I stumble on my words?", "They might think I'm incompetent", and "I couldn't handle it if I mess up mid-presentation!" To challenge these thoughts, you can ask yourself some powerful questions from Thought Inspection:

- Just the facts... Do I know for sure that this thought is true?
- Travel into the future... Will this be such a big deal in 5 years?
- Paint a different picture... If my thought were wrong, how could things turn out well instead?

Often, we find that there can be faults among our thoughts and we can reframe them. But sometimes our thoughts do come true, and so another important piece of Thought Inspection is considering how we could coach ourselves through those challenges. And when we consider how we might be able to problem solve, who we could talk to, or that our feelings are temporary - they will come and go, we find that even though it might be hard, we *can* handle situations that may provoke anxious thoughts.

Get Started Today

If you want to go beyond the old fixes of just suppressing bodily sensations, our Stress, Anxiety, & Worry program could be the place to start. If you're not ready to dive right into a program, consider taking a quick mental health assessment by scanning or visiting learntolive.com/partners and enter access code **MMHG**. Our programs and resources are available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.

