

Anxiety & Depression Workbook FOR **DUMMIES®**

by Charles H. Elliott, PhD and Laura L. Smith, PhD

Foreword by Aaron T. Beck, MD

University Professor of Psychiatry, University of Pennsylvania



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Drs. Elliott and Smith are available for speaking engagements and workshops. You can visit their Web site at www.PsychAuthors.com.



Dedication

We dedicate this book to our kids: Alli, Brian, Grant, Nathan, Sara, and Trevor. And to our granddaughter: Lauren Melodie. And finally to our parents: Edna Louise Smith, Joe Bond Elliott, Tea Elliott, William Thomas Smith (1914-1999), and Suzanne Wieder Elliott (1923-2004).

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Foreword

Not long ago I wrote the following foreword for the book, *Depression For Dummies*. As the current *Anxiety & Depression Workbook For Dummies* is a companion to that book as well as *Overcoming Anxiety For Dummies*, I believe the previous foreword is both germane and worth repeating, followed by some specific comments about the current work.

“I am very pleased that Drs. Charles Elliott and Laura Smith have reviewed and distilled the scientific literature on the treatment of depression for the general public. This book is uniquely comprehensive in that it thoroughly covers the scientifically validated treatments for depression, including behavior therapy, medications, interpersonal therapy, and cognitive therapy. The authors have also included promising ideas based on mindfulness and positive psychology. However, they have chosen to emphasize the importance of cognitive therapy because no other therapy has received as much support as cognitive therapy for the treatment of depression.

Thus, Drs. Elliott and Smith have woven important cognitive therapy principles into their presentation of the other validated approaches to depression. This decision is appropriate since research has suggested that some of these other therapies may in fact work due in part to the cognitive therapy strategies embedded within them.

I believe a word about cognitive therapy is in order. In the late 1950s, I began developing cognitive therapy. At the time, I was dissatisfied with the lack of evidence supporting the value of the prevailing psychotherapy — Freudian psychoanalysis — in treating depression. Cognitive therapy quickly became established as a highly effective treatment for depression, a finding that has been verified in numerous subsequent clinical trials. Over the ensuing decades, cognitive therapy has also demonstrated excellent outcomes in the treatment of problems with anger, anxiety, panic disorder, stress, relationship problems, substance abuse, eating disorders, and most recently, even schizophrenia. To date, no other psychotherapy has demonstrated such consistent effectiveness across a broad swath of problems. *Depression For Dummies* does a marvelous job of providing readers with the core techniques and principles of cognitive therapy as applied to depression.

I feel it's important to note that *Depression For Dummies* is not a book for dummies! Rather, this book lays out the principles of cognitive therapy, as well as other validated psychotherapies, in exceptionally clear terms. Drs. Elliott and Smith include fascinating clinical examples and effective exercises within the most reader-friendly, entertaining format I've seen in a book of this genre. I have no doubt it will prove to be a powerful self-help resource as well as an adjunct to psychotherapy.

I have known Dr. Elliott since the early 1980s, when he was a highly skillful cognitive therapist serving in a major psychotherapy outcome study. I recall last encountering Drs. Elliott and Smith just a few years ago at an international conference on cognitive therapy in Catania, Italy. They presented at this conference as part of their honeymoon. Such dedication to cognitive therapy!

If you struggle with depression, I strongly recommend *Depression For Dummies*. These authors convey considerable compassion, empathy, and insight in addition to unusual clarity.”

At this time, I am especially pleased to see that Drs. Elliott and Smith have written a companion workbook called *Anxiety & Depression Workbook For Dummies*. This workbook gives you the basic essentials of each therapeutic strategy. After providing the rudimentary understanding you need, it quickly shows ways to put that information to work in your own life. You won't have to spend hours reading about technical jargon and irrelevant material. Almost everything in this book can be immediately applied to improving the way you feel, behave, and think. In addition, the authors have made the process amazingly painless. The exercises are highly engaging, and Drs. Elliott and Smith weave humor throughout that manages not to demean or condescend. You might just have a good time with this workbook!

Aaron T. Beck, MD
University Professor of Psychiatry
University of Pennsylvania

Introduction

Do you worry too much? Are you often sad or down in the dumps? Do you have to drag yourself out of bed in the morning? Or maybe you avoid people more than you should. If so, you're probably dealing with some type of anxiety or depression. Depression and anxiety are serious problems — they darken vision and distort thinking while draining joy and pleasure from life.

Everyone feels sad or worried from time to time. Unpleasant feelings are a normal part of life. But when depression or anxiety interferes with your work, play, and/or relationships, it's time to take action.

Good news! You can conquer these problems. And the *Anxiety & Depression Workbook For Dummies* will help. You can use this workbook on its own or as a supplement to counseling. In either case, numerous studies show that self-help efforts work.

Experts estimate that almost a quarter of the people in the world will experience significant problems with anxiety at some point in their lives. And between 15 and 20 percent will succumb to the ravages of depression at one point or another. Unfortunately, many people suffer from both of these maladies. Over the years, we've known many clients, friends, and family members who have anguished over anxiety or depression, but most of them have found significant relief.

So if you struggle with anxiety, depression, or both, you're not alone. We join you in your battle by giving you research-based strategies and plenty of practice opportunities to help you defeat depression and overcome anxiety.

About This Book

Our purpose in writing this book is to give you a wide range of skills and tools for managing anxiety and depression. Although we touch on essential concepts about depression and anxiety, this book is action-oriented — in other words, you have the opportunity to actively apply our professional ideas to your life in meaningful ways.

No doubt you used workbooks in school. A math workbook may have helped you apply math concepts to everyday problems. Or a reading workbook may have improved your ability to comprehend stories. Today, you can find workbooks on almost any topic, from selling your home and succeeding on tests to preparing your taxes and improving your memory.

The purpose of any workbook is to lay out the basics of a topic and then provide numerous opportunities to apply and practice the concepts at hand. Typically, books *explain* issues, and workbooks help you *master* new skills. In other words, the *Anxiety & Depression Workbook For Dummies* is “less talk — more action.”

Did you notice the “work” part of workbook? Don't put this book back on the shelf quite yet! You'll be well paid for your work in the form of increased life satisfaction and reduced emotional distress. And the work is actually rather interesting because you discover new ways to live your life and get what you want.

A Note to Our Depressed and Anxious Readers

Feeling depressed or anxious certainly isn't funny. In fact, when you're feeling this way, you may find it quite difficult to see the humor in anything. Nevertheless, we've chosen to include a little humor throughout this workbook. We understand that you may be offended that we appear to make light of what is a dark, difficult subject, but humor is an important coping tool. Our intention is to cheer you up a bit.

How to Use This Book

Unlike most workbooks, you don't necessarily have to read and use the chapters of this book in order, beginning to end. You can pick and choose what chapters to read and what exercises to do, and you can also choose where to start and stop. We give you just enough information to carry out the exercises and improve your moods.

This book is meant to be written in. Writing enhances skills and commits you to taking action, so we strongly encourage you to do the work required for your recovery by writing out your answers in the forms and worksheets. Don't worry about your handwriting or spelling — nobody's grading your work.

Throughout this book, you'll see sections labeled My Reflections. When you come across a reflection space, we recommend that you take a little time to ponder what you're feeling, what you've discovered, and/or any new insights you've achieved. But hey, this is your workbook — write down anything you want in My Reflections.

What Not to Read

Workbooks may conjure up memories of boredom and drudgery for you. Do you recall endless hours of mindless homework? Your teacher probably told you to fill out every single page of each and every assignment, whether you'd mastered the skills or not.

Not in this book! We don't tell you what you have to do. You can pick and choose which sections to read and which exercises to complete. Although we believe all our suggestions have value, we encourage you to judge for yourself which exercises offer maximum benefit to you.

What We Assume About You

By the sheer fact that you've picked up this book, we assume, perhaps foolishly, that you want to do something about depression and/or anxiety. We hope you already know a little about these topics, but if you want to know more, we suggest you read either or both of the companion books to this workbook: *Overcoming Anxiety For Dummies* (Wiley) and *Depression For Dummies* (Wiley). Of course, we're slightly biased toward these books because we wrote them, but honestly, they'll broaden your understanding of working through emotional distress.

How This Book Is Organized

The *Anxiety & Depression Workbook For Dummies* is organized into seven parts, which we outline in the following sections.

Part I: Analyzing Angst and Preparing a Plan

This part is all about helping you identify your problem and take the first small steps toward recovery. Chapter 1 helps you discover whether you have a problem with anxiety or depression. The quizzes in this chapter help you see where these problems show up in your world and what they do to your thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and relationships. In Chapter 2, you go on a journey to the origins of your problems with anxiety and depression because knowing where it all began helps you realize that you're not to blame. Because change sometimes feels overwhelming, Chapter 3 addresses self-sabotage and helps you keep moving forward. Chapter 4 provides you with ways for keeping track of your moods and becoming more aware of your thoughts.

Part II: Thinking About Thinking: Thought Therapy

The chapters in this part help you become a thought detective. In Chapter 5, you find out how to examine your thoughts for distortions; then, in Chapter 6, you prosecute those distorted thoughts and rehabilitate them.

Chapter 7 shows you how certain core beliefs darken and distort your view of yourself, your world, and your future as surely as eyeglasses with the wrong prescription muddle normal sight. We include tools for regrinding your life-lenses so you see things more clearly. Finally, in Chapter 8, you have the opportunity to practice mindfulness and acceptance — more techniques for handling troubling thoughts.

Part III: Actions Against Angst: Behavior Therapy

Chapter 9 spells out how you take direct action against the natural tendency to avoid what makes you depressed or anxious. In Chapter 10, we get you up and moving by providing workbook-type exercises that encourage physical exercise. When you're depressed or anxious, few activities sound like fun, so Chapter 11 has worksheets for reintroducing pleasure into your life. Finally, Chapter 12 helps you tackle life problems that grow out of your emotional distress.

Part IV: Phocus on Physical Pheelings

Addressing the physical side of distress is as important as addressing the mental or emotional side. Excessive stress associated with anxiety and depression produces hormones that ravage the body by increasing blood pressure and contributing to stomach problems, weight gain, and heart disease. Therefore, relaxation techniques play an important role in alleviating anxiety and depression. In Chapter 13, you find a variety of exercises for reducing tension and stress. Because medication is an additional option for many people who are depressed or anxious, Chapter 14 guides you through the decision of whether or not medications are the right choice for you.

Part V: Relationship Therapy

Depression and anxiety can spill over and contaminate your relationships like sewage dumped into a river. Good relationships offer support in dealing with emotional distress, whereas spoiled relationships just make things worse. Chapter 15 helps you figure out if your relationships are suffering, and the worksheets and exercises in Chapter 16 guide you in improving the quality of your relationships.

Part VI: Looking Beyond Anxiety and Depression

After people overcome their anxiety and depression, naturally they prefer to go on with their lives as though they'd never had a problem. Unfortunately, like the flu, you can catch depression or anxiety more than once. Chapter 17 tells you how to prepare for and deal with any setbacks in your condition, and Chapter 18 helps you develop positive habits that lead to a more joyful, meaningful, and connected life.

Part VII: The Part of Tens

This part contains a couple of our top ten lists when it comes to the subject of anxiety and depression. Chapter 19 recommends ten resources for getting help in dealing with your depression and anxiety. If you're looking for a quick way out of a bad mood, Chapter 20 is for you — it lists ten remedies that don't take a whole lot of effort.

Characters in This Book

Throughout this workbook, we use fictional characters to illustrate how you can complete the various worksheets and exercises. Although these characters aren't real people, they represent composites of various clients and others we've known and worked with over the years. Any resemblance to an actual individual, whether alive or deceased, is unintended and coincidental. Nonetheless, we believe you'll find yourself relating to these characters and find their experiences useful.

Icons Used in This Book



Throughout the book, icons in the margins alert you to important types of information:

This icon marks particularly noteworthy information that we hope you'll remember long after you read this workbook.



This icon tells you it's time to roll up your sleeves and get to work! It denotes a worksheet, form, or exercise for you to fill out.



This icon points to specific examples that show you the way through worksheets or exercises.



This icon appears when you need to take care; you may need professional help or should be on the lookout for possible trouble.



This icon alerts you to especially useful insights and explanations.

Where to Go from Here

The *Anxiety & Depression Workbook For Dummies* can help you deal with your depression and anxiety. It's pragmatic, concrete, and goes straight to the point. As such, this workbook doesn't devote a lot of text to lengthy explanations or embellishments of basic concepts, so you may wish to find out more about specific types of depression and anxiety, available medications, and alternative treatments. For that purpose, we strongly recommend that you consider reading one or both of the companion books, *Depression For Dummies* (Wiley) and *Overcoming Anxiety For Dummies* (Wiley).

Part I

Analyzing Angst and Preparing a Plan

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"We've tried adjusting your diet, and prescribing medication for your anxiety. Now let's try loosening some of those bolts and see if that does anything."

In this part . . .

We help you figure out how anxiety or depression affects your thinking, behaving, feeling, and bodily sensations. You discover how your problems began and work toward accepting that you're not to blame for having them. In case you feel stuck or unable to move forward, we give you strategies for overcoming obstacles. Finally, you see how to keep track of both your moods and the thoughts that accompany distressing feelings.

Chapter 1

Sorting Out Signs of Anxiety and Depression

In This Chapter

- ▶ Figuring out how depression and anxiety affect you
- ▶ Finding your personal starting point
- ▶ Knowing when to get more help

Everyone feels sad or worried from time to time. Such emotions are both natural and unavoidable. People worry about their children, bills, aging parents, jobs, and health. And most people have shed a tear or two watching a sad movie or a news story about a poignant tragedy. That's normal. A little bit of anxiety and depression is part of everyday life.

But when sadness fills most of your days or worries saturate your mind, that's not so normal. You may be experiencing a real problem with depression or anxiety. Anxiety and depression can affect how you think, behave, feel, and relate to others. The discussion and quizzes in this chapter help you figure out how depression and anxiety affect your life. When you understand what's going on, you can start doing something about it.



Don't freak out if the quizzes in this chapter reveal that you have a few symptoms of anxiety or depression. Most people do. We let you know if you should be concerned.



If your symptoms are numerous and severe or your life seems out of control, you should consult your primary care physician or a mental health professional. These quizzes aren't meant to replace trained mental health professionals — they're the only people who can really diagnose your problem.

Dwelling on Dismal and Worried Thoughts

If you were able to listen in on the thoughts that reverberate through a depressed person's head, you might hear "I'm a failure," "My future looks bleak," "Things just keep on getting worse," or "I regret so many things in my life."

On the other hand, the thoughts of an anxious person might sound like "I'm going to make a fool out of myself when I give that speech," "I never know what to say at parties," "The freeway scares me to death," "I know that the odds of a plane crash are small, but flying scares me," or "I'm going to have a nervous breakdown if my editor doesn't like what I write."

Thoughts influence the way you feel. The very darkest thoughts usually lead to depression, whereas anxiety usually stems from thoughts about being judged or hurt. And, of course, people often have both types of thoughts.



Do your thoughts dwell on the dark, dismal, or the scary aspects of life? Take the quiz in Worksheet 1-1 to determine if your thoughts reflect a problem with anxiety or depression. Put a check mark next to an item if you feel the statement applies to you.

Worksheet 1-1

The Negative Thinking Quiz

- ☐ 1. Things are getting worse and worse for me.
- ☐ 2. I worry all the time.
- ☐ 3. I think I'm worthless.
- ☐ 4. I never know what to say.
- ☐ 5. No one would miss me if I were dead.
- ☐ 6. I'm afraid that I'll get sick.
- ☐ 7. I think I'm a failure.
- ☐ 8. My thoughts race, and I obsess about things.
- ☐ 9. I don't look forward to much of anything.
- ☐ 10. I get really nervous around people I don't know.
- ☐ 11. The world would be better off without me.
- ☐ 12. Thoughts about past trauma keep rolling through my mind.
- ☐ 13. I find it impossible to make decisions.
- ☐ 14. I can't stand it when I'm the center of attention.
- ☐ 15. My life is full of regrets.
- ☐ 16. I can't stand making mistakes.
- ☐ 17. I don't see things getting any better in the future.
- ☐ 18. I worry about my health all the time.
- ☐ 19. I'm deeply ashamed of myself.
- ☐ 20. I over-prepare for everything.

Although these thoughts can occur to someone who's either depressed or anxious (or both), the odd-numbered items are most indicative of depression, and the even-numbered items reflect anxious thinking. There's no pass or fail mark on this quiz. However, the more items you endorse, the more you have cause for concern; specifically, if you check more than eight or ten items, you should think seriously about addressing your condition. At the same time, if you very strongly believe in any of these items, you just may have too much anxiety or depression.



If you have any thoughts of suicide or utter hopelessness, you should consult your primary care physician or a mental health professional immediately.

Walking in Quicksand: Apprehensive and Blue Behavior

If you were to follow a depressed or anxious person around, you might see some behavioral signs of their emotional turmoil. That's because depression and anxiety on the inside affect what people do on the outside. For example, a depressed person may look tired, move slowly, or withdraw from friends and family; an anxious person may avoid socializing or have a trembling voice.



Take the quiz in Worksheet 1-2 to see if your behavior indicates a problem with anxiety and/or depression. Check off each statement that applies to you.

Worksheet 1-2

The Distraught Behavior Quiz

- ☐ 1. I've been crying for no clear reason.
- ☐ 2. I pace around when I'm worried.
- ☐ 3. Sometimes I can't make myself get out of bed.
- ☐ 4. I avoid going into crowded areas.
- ☐ 5. I can't seem to make myself exercise.
- ☐ 6. I avoid risks because I'm afraid of failure.
- ☐ 7. I don't do things for fun lately.
- ☐ 8. I always play things on the safe side.
- ☐ 9. I've been missing work lately because I just don't have the motivation.
- ☐ 10. I'm really fidgety.
- ☐ 11. I've been doing everything at a much slower pace for no good reason.
- ☐ 12. I avoid people or places that remind me of a bad past experience.
- ☐ 13. I don't care what I look like anymore.
- ☐ 14. I spend too much time making sure I look okay.
- ☐ 15. I don't laugh anymore.
- ☐ 16. My hands shake when I'm nervous.
- ☐ 17. I've been letting things go that I need to attend to.
- ☐ 18. I feel compelled to repeat actions (such as hand washing, checking locks, arranging things in a certain way, and so on).

Again, there's no pass or fail on this quiz. The more items you check, the greater the problem. Even-numbered items are most consistent with anxiety, and odd-numbered items largely indicate depression. And, of course, like many people, you may have symptoms of both types of problems.

Feeling Funky

Depression and anxiety inevitably produce physical symptoms. In fact, some people primarily suffer from changes in appetite, sleep, energy, or pain while reporting few problematic thoughts or behaviors. These symptoms directly affect your body, but they're not as easily observed by other people as the behavioral signs covered in the preceding section.



Take The Sad, Stressed Sensations Quiz in Worksheet 1-3 to see if your body is trying to tell you something about your emotional state.

Worksheet 1-3

The Sad, Stressed Sensations Quiz

- ☐ 1. I have no appetite.
- ☐ 2. My palms sweat all the time.
- ☐ 3. I wake up too early each morning and can't go back to sleep.
- ☐ 4. I've been experiencing a lot of nausea and diarrhea.
- ☐ 5. I've been sleeping a lot more than usual.
- ☐ 6. I feel shaky all over.
- ☐ 7. I've been having lots of aches and pains for no good reason.
- ☐ 8. When I'm nervous, my chest feels tight.
- ☐ 9. I have no energy lately.
- ☐ 10. My heart races when I'm tense.
- ☐ 11. I've been constipated a lot more often than usual.
- ☐ 12. I feel like I can't catch my breath.
- ☐ 13. I'm eating all the time lately.
- ☐ 14. My hands are often cold and clammy.
- ☐ 15. I've lost my sex drive.
- ☐ 16. Sometimes I hyperventilate.
- ☐ 17. Every move I make takes more effort lately.
- ☐ 18. I get dizzy easily.



The symptoms in this quiz can also result from various physical illnesses, drugs in your medicine cabinet, or even your three-cup coffee fix in the morning. Be sure to consult your primary care physician if you're experiencing any of the symptoms in The Sad, Stressed Sensations Quiz. It's always a good idea to have a checkup once a year and more frequently if you experience noticeable changes in your body.

Although physical sensations overlap in anxiety and depression, even-numbered items in the quiz above are most consistent with anxiety, and the odd-numbered items usually plague those with depression. There's no cutoff point for indicating a problem. The more statements you check off, though, the worse your problem.

Reflecting upon Relationships

When you're feeling down or distressed for any length of time, odds are that your relationships with those around you will take a hit. Although you may think that your depression or anxiety affects only you, it impacts your friends, family, lovers, co-workers, and acquaintances.



Take the quiz in Worksheet 1-4 to see if your emotions are causing trouble with your relationships. Check off any statements that apply to you.