

Name _____

Date _____

ANXIETY SPECTRUM-1 SUPPLEMENT

Anxiety always requires a stimulus. The stimulus can either be internal or external. An internal stimulus is a thought and an external stimulus is something we perceive through one of our senses. Either type can activate our autonomic nervous system, the internal system that biologically prepares us for threat. It is in this “threat preparation” mode that we experience the energy draining and uncomfortable symptoms of anxiety (in the extreme cases shortness of breath and rapid heart rate).

On any given day, all of us will experience anxiety to some degree – it’s just a question of how much. Some anxiety events are relatively short lived; an example would be when someone changes lanes on a freeway and almost hits us. In this event our anxiety escalates and subsides very quickly. Some anxiety events are persistent and on-going; an example of this might be someone who is insecure about their job status and constantly afraid they will lose their job. There are countless types of anxiety events, each with their own unique “wave form”.

There are many ways to manage anxiety, but the single most productive by far is to understand the longer term forms of anxiety you experience and eliminate them or decrease their intensity. The following list is a cuing list to help you and/or your clinician identify as many of these forms as possible.

Death or physical harm (this can also relate to people you care about or feel responsibility for)

Social – This can relate to fears of conflict associated with people or fears related to rejection, abandonment, humiliation or loss of status. The easiest way to inventory this sector is look at your closest or most important social relationships and ask whether they stimulate anxiety.

Financial or Job Security _____

Legal or related to authority _____

Restriction, confinement or loss of freedom _____

Medical or emotional welfare _____

Disclosure of secrets _____

Anxiety about anxiety _____

Memories associated with trauma _____

This list is not meant to be complete or exhaustive, but it contains many of the most commonly reported longer term forms of anxiety. Making the stimulus structure of your anxiety visible is empowering. Many times in doing this the solutions will suggest themselves.