



BEHAVIOR PATTERNS COMMON WITH ANXIETY & DEPRESSION

The following is a list of common behaviors which increase depression and anxiety. The behaviors provide *temporary symptom relief* but keep you stuck in unhealthy patterns. Counseling therapy can help you learn new skills and healthier ways to cope with uncomfortable emotions.

AVOIDANCE

Behavior pattern of doing things to avoid uncomfortable emotions or situations. The pattern quickly becomes habituated (meaning that you become good at it). Addressing your anxiety and depression symptoms needs to go the opposite direction - you want to move towards difficult situations and emotions, while learning how to self-soothe and problem solve well.

A person reports feeling uncomfortable in social situations so she cancels plans with friends and stays home to watch Netflix movies. She feels better for the evening but then begins to feel the discomfort return.

COVER + DUMP

Keeping your real self hidden out of fear that you will be misunderstood or rejected for having a certain feeling or need. And having one person that you dump all of your emotions or fears on without accepting their influence to heal or change a behavior pattern. The pattern blocks your ability to self-soothe and address your concerns directly.

A person spends his workday engaged, but when he gets home he complains for hours and hours about how his job is slowly killing him. His spouse offers support and understanding and he feels better for the evening.

AGGRESSION

Becoming overly aggressive when someone or a situation does not meet your expectations. This can be acting like a bully (not respecting differences or another's boundaries), dominating the conversation or physically destroying objects. Research shows that the more you engage in aggression, the more likely you are to cope with aggression.

A person punches his furniture when he feels threatened that his relationship with his intimate partner will end.

MOOD ALTERING

When unable to self-soothe in healthy ways, people will often turn to substances in order to numb, calm or shift uncomfortable emotions. This can include food, alcohol, recreational drugs or other activities which are mood altering.

A person dislikes her job so she gets high-fat fast food during her lunch breaks to cope with the her emotions of powerlessness and fear of changing her situation.

ACTING OUT

Doing certain behaviors to feel alive and engaged in your life. Common behaviors are engaging in high risk sexual activity, creating conflict with others, creating drama and discord, or any other activity that is not a priority to you.

A person spends a majority of the day talking about interpersonal conflict with a friend but repeatedly says, "I just don't want all this drama in my life."

REDIRECTED FOCUS

Focusing and acting on a concern that has less priority to you in order to temporarily decrease your anxiety level.

A person ignores budgeting because the thought of taking actions increases uncomfortable emotions. Instead, he focuses on getting a new tattoo to the point that his energy and focus is redirected to a lesser priority.

REASSURANCE CHASING

Developing interpersonal rituals to cope with anxious feelings (or other uncomfortable emotions) rather than operating within your own set of values.

A person continually asks his supervisor if his performance is acceptable even though his performance evaluation indicated that he was meeting expectations. Instead of self-monitoring his own behavior, he repeatedly asks his supervisor for reassurance and comfort.

UNMINDFUL RESILIENCE

Repeatedly engaging in a behavior that does not improve your mood or anxiety level because the activity is habitual and familiar to you.

First thing in the morning, a person turns on the TV and sits on the couch even though it has a negative impact on her mood.