

# ANXIETY 101

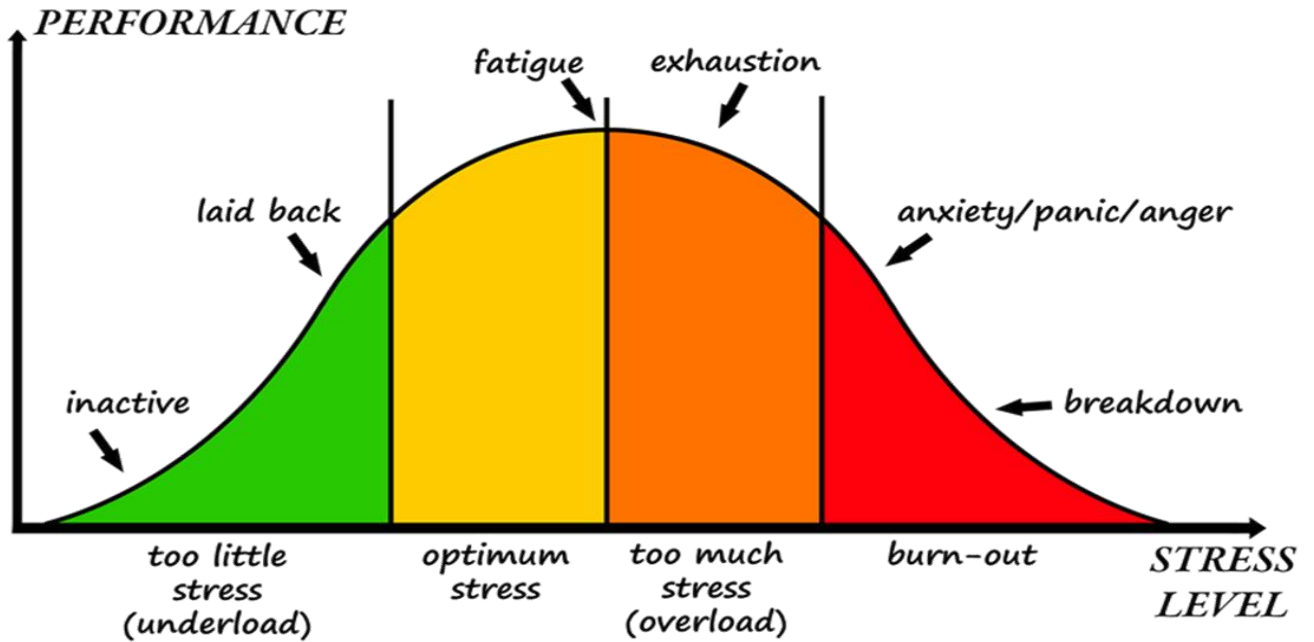


## Student Handouts

**Stony Brook University Counseling & Psychological Services**  
**(631) 632-6720**  
**[stonybrook.edu/caps](http://stonybrook.edu/caps)**

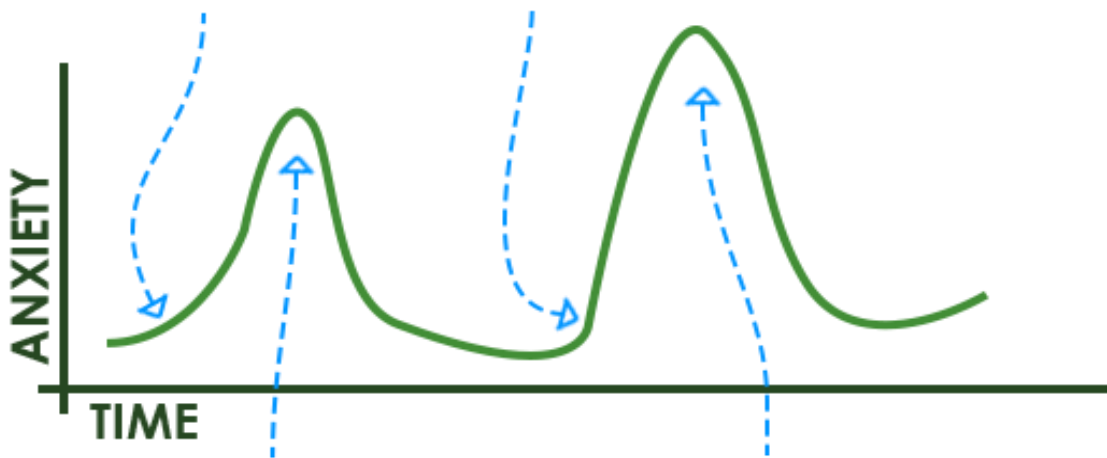
Adapted for SBU CAPS with permission from Cal Poly Counseling Services, San Luis Obispo

## STRESS CURVE



## Anxiety - Avoidance Roller Coaster

(A person is confronted with an anxiety-producing situation which leads to an uncomfortable sense of worry and agitation.)

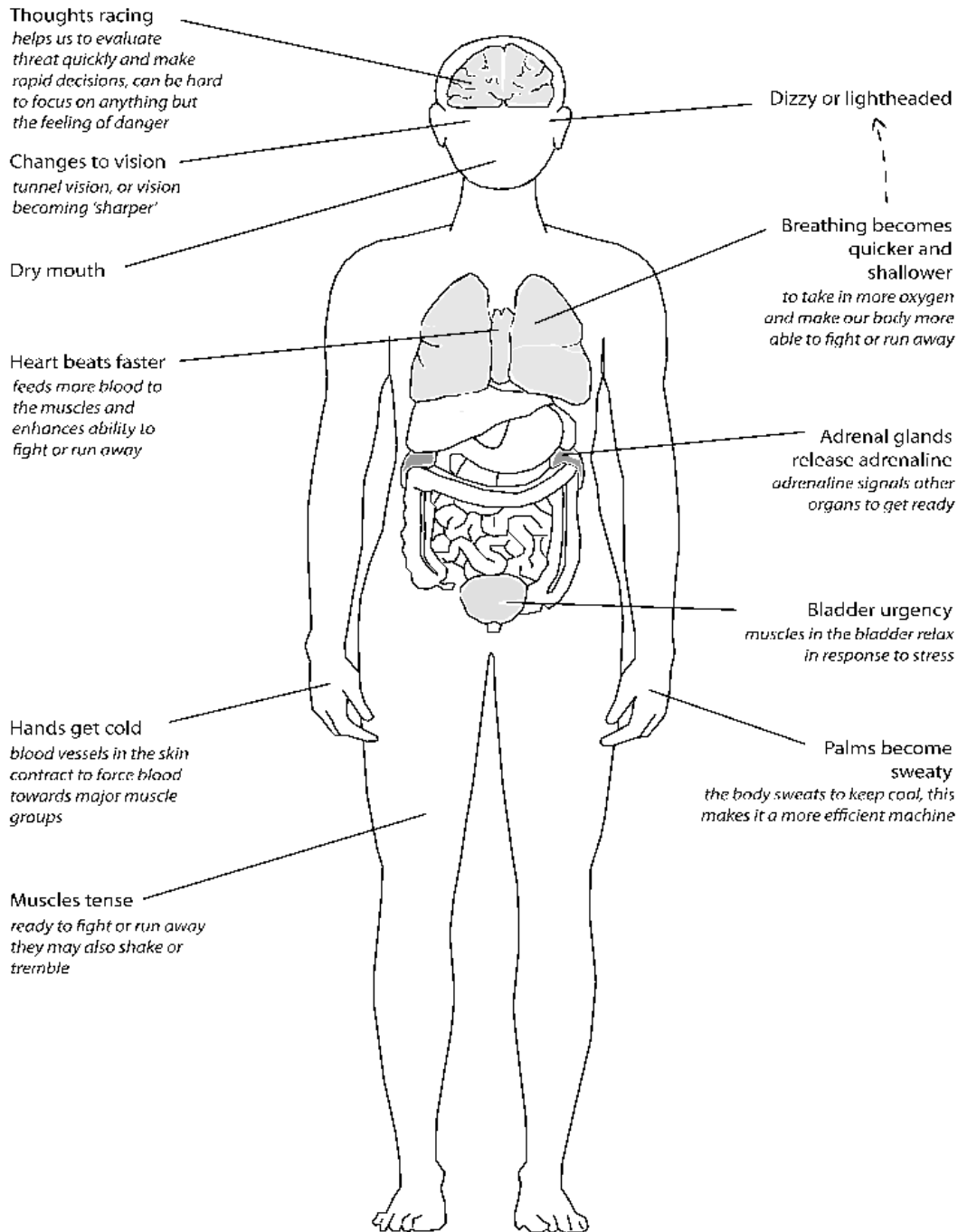


(The anxiety-producing situation is avoided, and the person receives a feeling of relief. However, next time the anxiety will be worse.)

Adapted from- <http://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-guide/cbt-for-anxiety>

## Threat System (Fight or Flight)

The 'fight or flight' response gets the body ready to fight or run away. Once a threat is detected your body responds automatically. All of the changes happen for good reasons, but may be experienced as uncomfortable when they happen in 'safe' situations.



# Cross Sectional Formulation

**Situation** (*When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?*)

**A student invited me to a party in my residence hall, but I didn't know her very well and felt anxious about going.**

**Physical** (*When anxious, what physical sensations did you experience? What did you notice in your body?*)

**Heart racing, tight chest, shallow breathing, hot**

**Emotional** (*What emotions came up for you when you felt anxious?*)

**Scared, ashamed,  
Lonely, agitated, nervous**

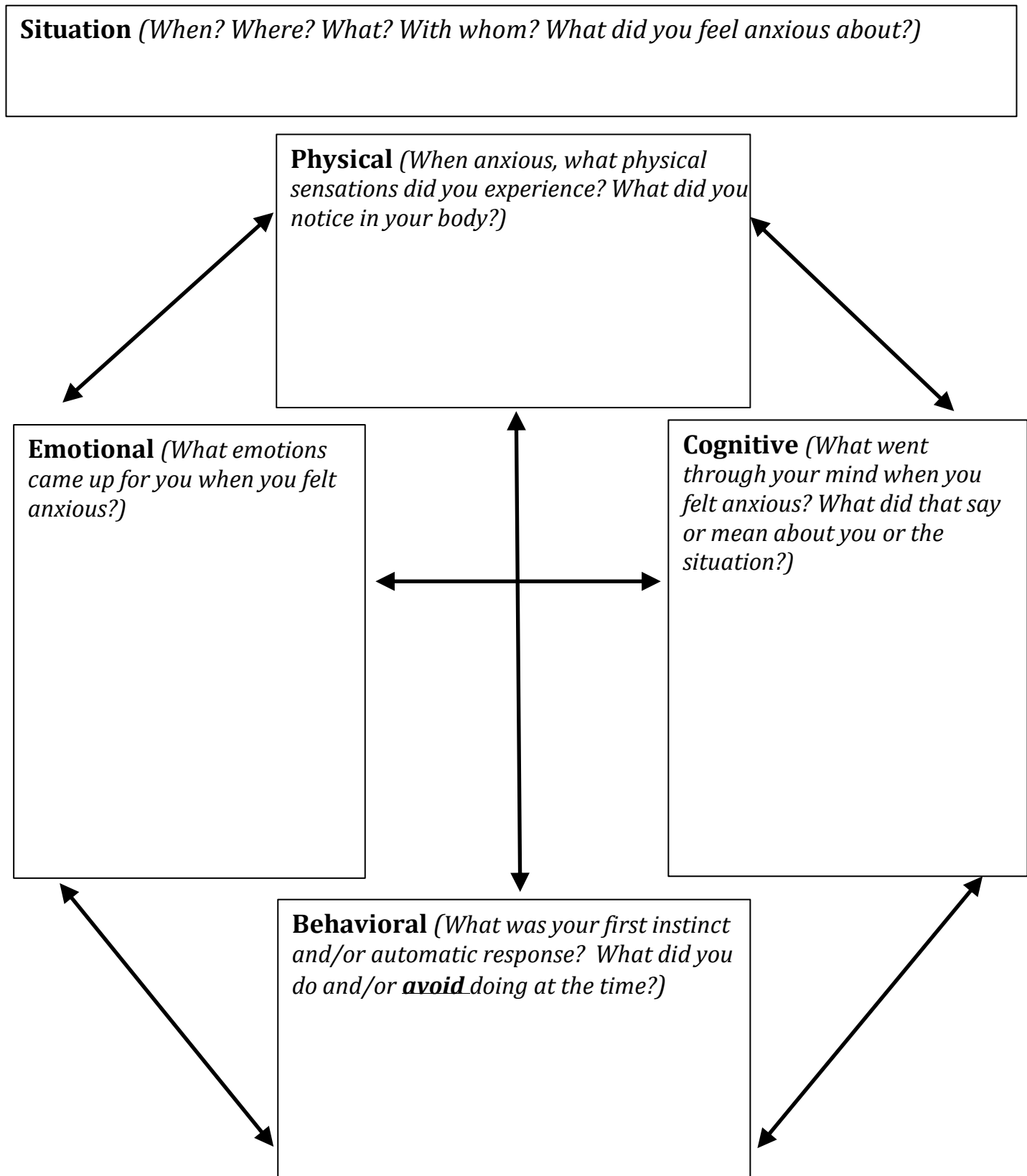
**Cognitive** (*What went through your mind when you felt anxious? What did that say or mean about you or the situation?*)

**I won't know anyone at the party and will feel awkward. No one will like me because I'm so socially awkward. I won't have fun. But if I say no, this person won't like me and I wouldn't make friends.**

**Behavioral** (*What was your first instinct and/or automatic response? What did you do and/or **avoid** doing at the time?*)

**My first instinct was to say no. I avoided saying no but telling her that I would think about it. I never got back to her. I didn't go to the party.**

# Cross Sectional Formulation



# Common Anxiety Symptoms

## Physical Symptoms

- Increased heart rate
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure
- Choking sensation
- Dizziness, lightheadedness
- Sweating, hot flashes, chills
- Nausea, upset stomach, diarrhea
- Trembling, shaking
- Weakness, unsteadiness, faintness
- Tense muscles, rigidity
- Dry mouth
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Behavioral Symptoms

- **Avoidance** of threat cues or situations
- **Escape**, flight
- Pursuit of safety, reassurance
- Restlessness, agitation, pacing
- Hyperventilation
- Freezing, motionlessness
- Difficulty speaking
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Cognitive Symptoms

- Fear of losing control, being unable to cope
- Fear of physical injury or death
- Fear of “going crazy”
- Fear of negative evaluations by others
- Frightening thoughts, images, or memories
- Perceptions of unreality or detachment
- Poor concentration, confusion, distractibility
- Narrowing of attention, hypervigilance for threat
- Poor memory
- Difficulty in reasoning, loss of objectivity
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Emotional Symptoms


- Feeling nervous, tense, wound up
- Feeling frightened, fearful, terrified
- Being edgy, jumpy, jittery
- Being impatient, frustrated
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from *The Anxiety and Worry Workbook* by Clark and Beck



# Unhelpful Thinking Styles

**All or nothing thinking**

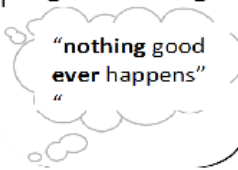


Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

*If I'm not perfect I have failed*


*Either I do it right or not at all*

**Over-generalizing**



Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

**Mental filter**



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

*Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes*

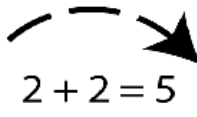
**Disqualifying the positive**



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

*That doesn't count*


**Jumping to conclusions**



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:


- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

**Magnification (catastrophizing) & minimization**



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophizing), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

**Emotional reasoning**



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.


*I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot*

**should must**

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

**Labeling**



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

*I'm a loser*  
*I'm completely useless*  
*They're such an idiot*

**Personalization**

**"this is my fault"**

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

## Identifying Triggers Worksheet

While at times it may be difficult to identify a trigger, understanding your triggers for anxiety is an important step in helping you know when to implement and/or emphasize practice of the coping strategies. Triggers can be external events (e.g., a test) or internal stimuli (e.g., a physical sensation or emotion) that led to your experience of anxiety (i.e., the emotional, physical, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms previously discussed during this workshop). Remember that sometimes the symptoms themselves can be a trigger that starts the cycle of anxiety.

The following are some typical categories in which triggers might appear with examples:

### Responses to Internal Stimuli:

- **Emotions:** e.g., feeling down, fear or worry
- **Mental Images:** e.g., replaying interpersonal interactions or performance experience
- **Physical State:** e.g., racing heartbeat, lightheadedness, tightness in chest
- **Thoughts:** e.g., “I might fail this test”, “That person must not like me”, “If someone talks to me in class, I won’t be able to handle it.”

### Responses to External Stimuli:

- **Presence of Others:** e.g., attending a social event, meeting with a professor, spending time with roommates, family interactions
- **Physical Setting:** e.g., a classroom, open areas on campus, inside a car
- **Social Pressure:** e.g., feeling pressured to make friends, feeling pressured to perform well in school (in comparison to your peers)
- **Activities:** e.g., a sports event, a party, going home for the weekend

List some triggers you experience related to your anxiety:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_