

A dozen ways to face your fears at school and at home:

1. Face your fears

Avoiding fears only makes them scarier. Whatever your fear, if you face it, it will eventually start to fade. When you avoid it creates temporary relief. If you overdose on avoidance you build habits that will not be helpful in the long run.

Feel impossible? Start with small steps. Gradual exposure can help train your brain that the thoughts about the issue are not 100percent true. If your brain tells you that you are sure to fail and that everything is horrible- you are less likely to face the fear. Start with a goal that is achievable. Example, you skip class for a week because you are afraid of changing in the locker room. This creates more worry, calls home about you not being in class impact your relationships, and your grades are impacted. You know it isn't the best thing to do but you are afraid. Face the fear gradually. Go to the class, talk to your teacher. Can't do that- go to your school counselor and try to make a plan. Arrange to change in the bathroom. Start small and build on success.

2. Take a Time In

Stay in the situation and breathe through it. Stay at work, stay in class, and stay on the sports field. Take care of your amygdala so that your frontal lobe is still online. One way: Notice all of the red things on the wall (or whatever color) and describe them to yourself. Become more present and “grounded” so that you can re-focus your energy. Another way: Take deep breaths. Breathe in and count to 4, hold your breath for 4 counts, breathe out for 4 counts, and then hold your breath for 4 counts. Repeat. This is called [square breathing](#).

3. Take a Time Out

If a “Time In” wasn't helpful, try to take a “Time Out” so that you can physically calm down. Distract yourself from the worry for 5-15 minutes. Ask to go to the counseling center (remember to sign-in), listen to music, have a cup of tea in the Cove at lunch, take a walk on campus at lunch, or watch your favorite funny video on you-tube. If you are at home you can take a shower, go for a run, or hang out with your dog/cat.

4. Breathe through panic

If you start to get a faster heartbeat or sweating palms, the best thing is not to fight it. Stay where you are and simply feel the panic without trying to distract yourself. Place the palm of your hand on your stomach and breathe slowly and deeply. The goal is to teach your thoughts that you are still in charge. Take care of your big feelings so that your frontal lobe (your thinking brain) stays online and your amygdala (fight/flight/freeze) does not take over.

[Watch this](#)

[Try this](#)

5. Imagine the worst

Try imagining the worst thing that can happen – perhaps it's panicking and having a heart attack. Perhaps it is falling in front of your class or throwing up in front of someone. Then think- how likely is that going to be? Has it happened before?

6. Look at the evidence

What is your proof? If the worst thing happens, what will happen next? A common example: If you are afraid of driving because you got in a car accident: Think to yourself- how many times have I been a passenger in the car? Thousands? How many times have I been in a car accident? Twice. How likely is it that I will get in a car accident today? Not likely. What is the worst that could happen? I could die. How likely is that? Not likely. How likely? Less than one percent? Possible is not the same thing as probable!

7. Do not try to be perfect

Life is full of stresses, yet many of us feel that our lives must be perfect. Bad days and setbacks will always happen, and it's important to remember that life is messy. It is not possible to be perfect. Period.

8. Visualize a peaceful place

Take a moment to close your eyes and imagine a place of safety and calm. It could be a scene of you walking on a beautiful beach, or snuggled up in bed with the dog next to you, or a happy memory from Summer break. Use your imagination and your 5 senses. What do you smell? The beach? What do you hear? The waves? What do you see? The sunset? What do you touch? The sand? Let the positive feelings soothe you until you feel more relaxed. *check out the app store on your phone or youtube for free peaceful place meditations. [Like this](#)

9. Talk about it

Sharing fears takes away a lot of their scariness. It takes away the power that the fear has on your behaviors. Talk to a friend, talk to an adult you trust. Remember: if there is a safety concern and your own safety plans are not working- find an adult to talk to.

10. Go back to basics

Sleep, eat, drink water, exercise, breathe, stay warm, shower.... Take care of your body- it is connected to your emotions and your thoughts!

11. Positive Thoughts

Negative thoughts consuming you? WRITE THEM DOWN! Then look at them and come up with an opposite statement or something that makes more sense. Example: I hate my body, I am so ugly! Response: My body works today, it allows me to walk and move. I appreciate that.

12. Reward yourself

Finally, give yourself some credit! Take a 10 minute break after you finish that homework assignment. Get a good snack. Take a bath. See a movie. Watch a 15 minute you-tube clip that makes you laugh.