

Safety Strategies vs. Expansive Strategies for Intolerance of Uncertainty

Here are some opportunities to practice with. On the left side are safety strategies commonly used in anxiety-producing situations. On the right are examples of expansive strategies you can use as alternatives.

Safety Strategy	Expansive Strategy
Check to see if loved ones arrive safely.	Assume safety and allow for uncertainty.
Recheck that you turned off the stove.	Only check once or not at all.
Go back and make sure you locked the door.	Don't check; allow for uncertainty.
Monitor sports team scores.	Wait until game is decided to check.
Research uncomfortable sensations online.	Breathe into uncomfortable sensations.
Make sure you packed everything for a trip.	Limit packing time.
Never leave home without your cell phone.	Walk the dog without it.
Order dishes you've ordered before and like.	Try something new and different.
Wash hands after touching public surfaces.	Wash hands before meals only.
Always use hand sanitizer.	Use hand sanitizer only at hospitals.
Make list of things to do weekday evenings.	Leave an evening free, allowing for spontaneity.
Make list of things to do on the weekends.	Leave a morning or afternoon unplanned.
Vacation where you did last year.	Travel to someplace unfamiliar.
Always take the fastest mode of transport.	Take a different method of transportation.
Postpone decisions until you are sure.	Set time to make a decision even if unsure.
Always rely on expert advice.	Decide something on your own.
Check for escape routes in public places.	Position yourself in the middle, far from exits.
Make extensive lists of pros and cons for a decision.	Flip a coin.

The preceding chart lists strategies that are behavioral. The chart below lists opportunities to practice mental expansion strategies.

Safety Strategy	Expansive Strategy
Mentally review things to make sure you did not forget to do something important.	Seek uncertainty by saying "I am willing to not know" or "I don't want to know."
Mentally scan your body for signs of illness or anxiety.	Seek uncertainty by saying "I am willing to not know" or "I don't want to know."
Weigh pros and cons over and over in your mind to make sure you are making the best decision.	Allow for uncertainty. Ask for uncertainty. Ask for more anxiety too.
Worry when reminded of a problem.	Use the five-step problem-solving process.
Worry over the same problem repeatedly.	Thank your monkey, and Ask for More. Or schedule yourself a Worry Time.