



# Feel-Good Friday

**An anxious feeling is a natural reaction to stress and challenges. When we fear anxious feelings, we amplify them.** When we acknowledge and accept anxious feelings rather than resisting them with growing fear, we give our mind and body a chance to calm and move through the experience. In order to function well when anxious feelings arise, adults and children can learn and practice skills to cope with uncertainty and discomfort. Breathing techniques, calming or empowering visualizations, and the use of compassionate self-talk can lessen the sense of being overwhelmed by anxiety. Cognitive distortions are thinking errors that can exaggerate the negative and lead to inaccurate assessments of situations and people. With practice, negative thought patterns can be changed or avoided.

- **All-or-nothing thinking** can be changed by looking for the in-between or balanced perceptions of both the positive and the negative in situations and in people. Avoiding statements of “always” or “never” can also steer you away from extreme thinking that distorts your view of reality.
- **Overgeneralization** and **labelling** can be overcome by focusing on solving a specific problem rather than labelling a whole category or your whole self as a problem. For example, if you get a low score on a test for placement into a new job, it does not mean you are no good in that subject area and that you are awful as a person. That low score only means that you did not answer those particular questions correctly in that particular moment when you completed the test. You can prepare to increase your score next time.
- **Mental filtering** is a cognitive distortion in which a person’s focus is only on the negative while not considering the positive. Intentionally looking for the positive at scheduled moments throughout the day or whenever a negative thought occurs can limit mental filtering.

**FOR PARENTS:** Although as parents we want to protect our children from discomfort and uncertainty, we sometimes must allow them to experience anxious feelings so they can learn to tolerate their body's reaction to them and to practice functioning through the discomfort that naturally arises and subsides throughout our daily lives. Parents can be present with children through uncertainty by matter-of-factly and empathetically saying, “I don’t know. It’s hard not to know. We don’t know exactly what is going to happen, so let’s be flexible.”

## You and Children Can Cope With Anxious Feelings

\*To receive email updates on current Emotional Wellness Programs, including virtual presentations, send an email saying “Feel Good” to [emotional-wellness-no-reply@tricityfamilyservices.org](mailto:emotional-wellness-no-reply@tricityfamilyservices.org)