

*Suggestions for Supporting the Anxious Person*

by

**Heather Stone, Ph.D.**  
Clinical Psychologist, PSY 21112

Dear Supportive Person,

The following are some suggestions that may benefit both you and the anxious person during difficult times.

*Check in with your own feelings first*, and notice your own responses as you begin to compose and comfort yourself. You will be very helpful just by modeling composure, compassion, and neutrality as you address the anxious person. The client is learning to address his/her symptoms as an objective observer, and it would be helpful if you adopt this attitude of neutrality as well. Speak in a loving but matter-of-fact manner. Let the anxious person look to the self for comfort, and walk their own path.

Briefly share your warmth and sincere concern, but do not be led by the momentum of the person's anxieties. Resist the urge to rescue or offer excessive reassurances. This often unwittingly reinforces the client's helplessness, anxieties, or dependence. Instead, try practicing some of these questions or approaches.

=====

I can see that you feel scared and overwhelmed. How can you reassure yourself right now?

Remember to practice controlled breathing: it really works.

I can see that you're very anxious about this, but I believe that you have the ability to cope with this situation.

Let's review your list of cognitive distortions together. Which ones might you be doing? What are some healthier or more positive ways of looking at this situation?

What does the *wise* part of you say about this? I have seen a *strong and insightful* part of you that that gets you through these difficult times. If you were helping a friend through this, what advice might you offer?

You may want to *redirect* your thoughts right now. Try going for a walk, journaling, listening to music, etc. (whatever makes you feel good). It's time to take a break from your thoughts right now.