

## H: Step One



### *Knowing Where You Are*

This first step in managing anxiety might seem puzzling, and you may ask, “Don’t we always know where we are?” The truth is that we often don’t. There are three time dimensions, past, present, and future, and chances are you aren’t aware of how much time you spend in any one of them. This is because, from moment to moment, your mind wanders out of the present and into the past or the future, where anxiety lives. Ruminating over the past and feeling apprehensive about the future generate anxiety. When your thoughts are unintentionally pulled into the past or the future, you end up devoting precious energy to events that are not happening now. When you plan for the future or review events from the past, your actions are intentional and do not generate anxiety. Anxiety does not exist in the present, and so the more time you spend in the present, focused on your goals, the less anxiety you will feel and the more you will accomplish.

It’s important to be aware of when you lose present awareness because the present is the only time dimension where reality exists, where anything actually happens. Staying in the present will allow you to focus your energy and accomplish your goals.



## Try It On!

### *Knowing Where You Are: Noticing Worries*

Each day, notice when your mind wanders into the past or future and where your worries take you. What worries do you notice?

*Light tomorrow with  
today.*

—Elizabeth Barrett  
Browning



## Try It On!

### *Knowing Where You Are: In Control versus Out of Control*

Notice how much time during the day you feel out of control, overwhelmed, or stressed. Stop and think where your thoughts have taken you. Have you gone to the past or the future? Come back to the present and feel the calm. Jot down your experiences with past, present, and future thinking.

*Stress is not what happens to us. It's our response to what happens. And response is something we can choose.*

—Maureen Killoran



## Try It On!

### *Knowing Where You Are: Noticing Fears*

Anxiety is fear of the unknown, which in essence is apprehension of the future. Do you worry about things that have yet to occur or may never occur? List five fears or worries below.

*Fear is static that  
prevents me from  
hearing myself.*

—Samuel Butler

