

SYSTEMIC QUESTIONS FOR ADDRESSING ANXIETY CHEAT SHEET

Acceptance

- Describe anxiety.
- How do you currently experience anxiety?
- What is most troubling to you about anxiety?
- What is helpful, if anything, about anxiety?
- Tell me about a time when you were able to get through an anxious moment or time? How did you do it?

Curiosity

- When is anxiety calm, more like a friend sitting next to you on the couch?
- When is anxiety angry or loud?
 - What about you is the same, or different, during these times?
- When anxiety screams, how do you respond?
- When anxiety whispers, how do you respond?
- When are you more powerful than anxiety?
- When does anxiety "win"?
 - What can you tell me/do you notice about these times?

Presence

- What do you notice about anxiety when you are fully engaged in [insert activity the client enjoys]?
- What do you notice about yourself when you are fully engaged in . . . ?
- What is present in your life that helps you live with anxiety?
 - How does it help?

Changing Dynamics

(all of the above categories work to accomplish this step)

- What kind of relationship do you have with anxiety?
 - How would you like it to be different?
- Have there been times when you had the relationship you hope for, even for a moment? If so, tell me about them.
- What would it mean if anxiety weren't the enemy, but a companion?
- When has anxiety been helpful?

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Notes

While I choose certain language in this cheat sheet, in order to illustrate a point, it's important to use language that fits for the client. For example, "power," "win," "enemy," etc., may not fit with the client's worldview or experience of anxiety. A systemic approach also incorporates the client's language. If you have questions about this cheat sheet, e-mail me at ili@familytherapybasics.com.

If you'd like support for the therapist life, come join the Get Refreshed Facebook group for therapists: <http://facebook.com/groups/familytherapybasics>

Hope to see you there!