Psychoeducation about Anxiety -- for You and Your Students

1. Introduction

If you are reading these materials, odds are you teach law, or are an administrator at a law school, and you are dismayed at the impact anxiety and related emotional issues have on your exceptionally bright and talented law students. You see how unnecessary anxiety interferes with participation and learning and leaves students feeling unhappy and vulnerable. (Some anxiety and stress is natural and, as we'll discuss, can even be performance enhancing.)

In these materials, we provide education about anxiety and introduce empirically validated techniques to reduce anxiety. We then show you how you can share these techniques with your students. Our goal is to teach you so you can teach your students. To make this easier, we teach you in almost precisely the same way we recommend you teach your students.

These materials were written by two psychologists (one of whom is a law professor) and were the basis of a three-hour course taught successfully for years by faculty (without prior training in psychology) at Stanford and Yale Law Schools.

In the first part of these materials, we provide some data on the impact of anxiety and depression on law students and lawyers.

We next give you a mental exercise that will help you connect with the anxiety you experienced in an academic or professional context. The exercise will introduce the cognitive model of anxiety and cognitive reframing techniques. These are the same exercises we suggest you teach your students and comprise the core of the course you will teach.

Finally, we briefly introduce behavioral approaches that reduce anxiety and provide exercises to help you understand those approaches.

The second part of these materials discusses how to teach what you learned to students. We provide a step-by-step guide to a three-hour course and follow-up exercises. Essentially, you will be teaching your students the same material you learn, in the same order. Finally, we provide information about referring students for mental health services if needed.

These materials are connected to a two-part webinar. In the first part, we teach these materials. In the second part, we discuss how you might teach the materials. You will have an opportunity to teach the materials to each other and obtain feedback from us and other participants.
PART ONE: PSYCHOEDUCATION ABOUT ANXIETY AND MOOD

2. Anxiety among law students and lawyers

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health disorders.\(^1\) According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), approximately one in five individuals will meet diagnostic criteria for an anxiety disorder in his or her lifetime. In addition, many individuals will experience anxiety that does not meet criteria for a mental health diagnosis but negatively and significantly impacts their physical health, inhibits interpersonal, academic, and professional performance, and impairs their overall quality of life.\(^2\) At some point, nearly everyone will experience bouts of significant anxiety.\(^3\)

While anxiety can be unpleasant and debilitating in its own right, it also can contribute to substance abuse, depression and suicide. Approximately one-half of all individuals with clinical depression also suffer from anxiety.\(^4\)

Anxiety disorders appear to have both genetic and environmental causes\(^5\) and there is no reason to believe that individuals who chose law careers are less susceptible. To the contrary, lawyers and law students operate in environments that are apt to generate anxiety. Most students experience law school as quite competitive. Law students and lawyers are evaluated in part on their public performance. They adopt the expectation that they must always think rapidly and articulate clearly often with inadequate sleep. In an adversarial context, lawyers frequently find their efforts deprecated by their opponent. Law schools try to prepare students for these pressures in a variety of ways (\textit{e.g.}, ‘cold-calling’, the Socratic method, clinical experience, trial practice, moot court), but that preparation itself often is a source of anxiety.

Law students face other sources of anxiety tied to their prospective career: whether they will like practicing law, whether they will be good at practicing law and, for many, whether they will be able to get a job in the profession. Finally, and

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\(^2\) AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION. DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS 190 (5th ed. 2013) [hereinafter DSM]

\(^3\) Id.


\(^5\) See, \textit{e.g.} John M. Hettema, The Structure of Genetic and Environmental Risk Factors for Anxiety Disorders in Men and Women, 62 ARCHIVES OF GEN. PSYCHIATRY 182, 182-89(2005)
relatedly, the time pressures of law school can threaten positive personal values (e.g., dating, exercise), which likely reduces student well-being.

In this high-stress environment, it is unsurprising that law students suffer from high rates of anxiety, starting in their first year of law school. These stress levels continue to rise over the course of law school. The high rate of emotional distress does not seem to be attributable to the rigors of graduate school more generally or to the personalities of people drawn to law school; law students’ rates of anxiety and depression are higher than the corresponding rates among medical school students and among future law students who have not yet started law school.

Studies of practicing lawyers show that many report high levels of job satisfaction and well-being; this is particularly true of more senior lawyers, and lawyers who do not work in large firms. Overall, though, anxiety continues to plague those in the profession. A study of lawyers in Washington State, for example, found anxiety levels roughly a standard deviation above that of the general population; over one-fifth of the sample had levels that placed them in the upper 2% of the general population. Lawyers were shown to have higher rates of depression and alcohol use. One study of more than one hundred professions found that

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9 Sheldon and Krieger, supra note 6, at 271; Benjamin et al., supra note 6, at 240.


11 Connie J.A. Beck, Bruce D. Sales & G. Andrew H. Benjamin, *Lawyer Distress: Alcohol-Related Problems and Other Psychological Concerns Among a Sample of Practicing Lawyers*, 10 J.L. & HEALTH 1, 45 (1995) (finding that “an alarming percentage of newly practicing lawyers are reporting a variety of significant psychological distress symptoms well beyond that expected in a normal population”).

12 Id.

13 Id.
lawyers had the highest rates of depression. Lawyers commit suicide at a rate six times higher than the general population.

3. Understanding anxiety

To best understand anxiety, it is helpful to have an experience fresh in your mind. To help you understand anxiety, and to illustrate the cognitive behavioral model of anxiety, we would like you to think back to your first week of law school.

4. Exercise one: Experiencing anxiety

Please have a pen handy while you do this and any following exercise.

Recall your first semester classes. Spend a few seconds remembering a few details of one class. Now imagine the professor has just raised a case name and is looking around the room to cold-call on someone. You feel yourself getting nervous as his eyes move in your direction. You’ve been chosen! He asks you to summarize the case.

You throw open your casebook to about where the case is, to look at the case and your notes. You see yourself looking at a case you haven’t read; you’ve gone too far. You thumb back a few pages - still too far. You start flipping pages backward. Now you’ve passed it. You think to yourself: this is ridiculous, I’m taking forever. You decide to take a stab at the case from memory. Your voice sounds shrill and tinny as you struggle through your answer. You see everyone look your way; your face feels flushed.

The professor nods and you heave a sigh of relief, but then hear a follow-up question: "What do you think the court was really getting at?"

You think, “What does he mean by, ‘really’?” Had you stated the issue and gotten it wrong? You think, “Be precise, be precise.” You see everyone is still looking at you. You incongruously notice the nails of the student two rows in front.

The professor calls on another student who has raised her hand.

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Now, imagining yourself to be in that situation, write down your thoughts.

Note: If you can recall a similar situation, you can think about that situation when answering this or subsequent questions.

My anxious thoughts now are:

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Stanford students in that situation wrote down thoughts such as "I’m an idiot,” "I’m the one admissions error,” "Everyone thinks I’m stupid,” "The professor thinks I’m a fool,” “I can’t do this,” ”I’ll never be able to figure this out,” ”I’m terrible at this,” ”Everyone thinks of me as the class clown.”

Re-read your thoughts, and now describe your emotions.

My emotions right now are:  (I feel)

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Stanford students in this situation described feeling: "stressed,” "disappointed in myself,” "angry at myself,” ”jealous of my classmates who answered the question right.”

Now read your thoughts and emotions and describe physical sensations. What is happening in your body?

In my body I feel:

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Stanford students described feeling hot, numb, their heart beating fast, breath quickening, and stomach cramps.
Finally, what is your behavioral response to all of this? What will this cause you to do?

I will respond by doing (or not doing):

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Stanford students listed avoid everyone, not raise my hand or participate, not sleep, seek out validation from friends, complain about it on Facebook, call my family.

5. The Cognitive Model: How negative automatic thoughts influence emotion

If you took the above exercise seriously, you probably had a number of negative thoughts - even though you are years removed from being in the student's situation. For example, you probably thought some variant of "I look like a fool." Your negative thoughts may have come in a chain, with one thought leading to another. These thoughts were accompanied by negative emotions (e.g., embarrassment), physical sensations (e.g., feeling hot), and behaviors (e.g., avoiding eye contact, leaving the room alone and quickly).

Negative automatic thoughts can stick with you and, each subsequent time you think them, they can reproduce the same emotions, physical sensations, and behaviors you experienced at the time of the initiating event. Negative automatic thoughts are not intentionally recalled or questioned - they just automatically enter your mind. Often, negative automatic thoughts are inaccurate or at least exaggerated.

The Cognitive Model posits that emotions, physical sensations, and behaviors are influenced by automatic thoughts, assumptions, interpretations, and beliefs about self, others, and the world. The Cognitive Model assumes that people can learn to: 1) notice and identify negative automatic thoughts; 2) question automatic thoughts for accuracy or utility; 3) identify inaccuracy, exaggeration, or error (also referred to as cognitive distortions or unhelpful thoughts); and 4) challenge cognitive distortions and reframe automatic thoughts to interrupt the cycle and change emotions, physical sensations, and behaviors. We begin this memo by reviewing some common cognitive distortions associated with anxiety.

6. Common cognitive distortions and self-defeating thoughts

While automatic thoughts obviously vary from situation to situation and person to person, cognitive distortions tend to fall within a few overlapping categories.
a. Overgeneralization. This is probably the most common cognitive distortion. An overgeneralization occurs when a person draws a conclusion from a single incident or piece of evidence. You might think “I’m no good at this,” after the first few weeks of trying out a new skill, or a new field of study. For example, perhaps as a student you received a poor grade on a law school exam, and concluded you’d never succeed at this profession.

b. Fortune Telling. Predicting the future (e.g., “I'm going to fail this test.”)

c. Mind-reading. This usually begins with He/She/They think... (e.g., "My classmates think I am the admissions error.")

d. Catastrophizing. This is fortune telling to the extreme. (e.g., "I am going to fail this test, get kicked out of law school, and end up unemployed and homeless.")

e. Discounting the positive. You ignore your successes or treat them as meaningless. For example, you may have gotten many compliments from students but focus on one student who wrote an unfavorable review. Or you focus on one critical comment in a workshop, ignoring all praise. A student might do the same on her grades. She tells herself that, “successes don’t count because the exams were easy.” She discounts praise as insincere.

f. Black-and-white/all-or-nothing/dichotomous thinking. Black-and-white, dichotomous thinking divides the world into two states, only one of which is acceptable. Unfortunately, the "good" state tends to be perfectionist, often unattainable, or very difficult to remain within.

One common form of black-and-white thinking is should/must/ought statements. These statements rigidly dictate appropriate standards of behavior for self and others. They generally include moral judgment that does not apply to every person or every situation. When you say you should do something you ignore reasons why you might not be able to (or might not choose to) do that.

Should statements set up no-win situations. When you do something you feel you should do, you often don't get much satisfaction: You've merely done something you should have done. But when you fail...

g. Emotional reasoning (mistaking emotion for rational thought or fact). Here you take the depth of emotion associated with a thought as proof of its veracity. If you find yourself saying “I just know it’s true, or I can feel it’s true, there is a good chance you’re falling into this category of thinking.”
h. **Maladaptive thoughts.** A maladaptive thought is true but often exaggerated or unhelpful to dwell on. Perseverating about a critical comment (*e.g.*, “You need to work on your legal writing”) is an example of a maladaptive thought. Strictly speaking, a maladaptive thought is not a cognitive distortion, but it usually accompanies cognitive distortions (such as discounting the positive) and lessens your ability to cope.

7. **Identifying automatic thoughts and cognitive distortions**

The first step in reframing or challenging these negative, automatic thoughts is to identify them. One technique is to keep a "thought record". At its simplest, a thought record is simply a piece of paper on which you record anxiety-provoking events and the negative thoughts that occurred before, during, and after the event.

8. **Exercise two: Identifying negative automatic thoughts and associated cognitive distortions**

Below we recreated (and slightly changed) some of the common negative thoughts from exercise one. Find the cognitive distortions associated with each negative thought on the thought record. We got you started below (notice that it is common for one negative automatic thought to have more than one cognitive distortion):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event: Cold-call in class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Automatic Thought(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I am no good at this&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Everyone thinks I’m a fool”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. **Ways to reframe negative automatic thoughts**

*If thoughts are automatic, can we really change how we think?* Psychologist, Carol Dweck, introduced the term mindset and differentiated between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset. With a growth mindset, people believe that qualities can be altered and developed through effort and diligence. With a fixed mindset, people believe that traits and qualities are fixed. You may be wondering then if these mindsets are genetic, permanent, and unalterable? Ample research shows that persistent practice of alternate thinking changes automatic thought patterns; and as a result, increases motivation, learning, and productivity. You can rewire your automatic responses to challenging situations. In addition, you are not stuck with acting on your first thought or emotion. You can challenge and reframe your
thoughts and subsequently alter your future thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and behaviors.

For some, simply recognizing automatic thoughts and identifying cognitive distortions may be sufficient. Suppose, for example, you notice the word "never" or "always" in a thought. You might say to yourself "I'm overgeneralizing" or "seeing things in black and white" and that might be enough to get you thinking differently. Others will find the following reframing techniques useful.

b. *What would you tell a friend?/Double standard.* With this technique, you reframe negative automatic thoughts the way you would for a good friend - or a student. You can usually think more rationally on behalf of a friend than you can for yourself. Often, you will be more charitable for and forgiving of a friend. This technique is sometimes called the "double standard" technique because it challenges the unrealistic and unforgiving standards imposed on ourselves.

c. *Think like a lawyer.* Another technique is to challenge the negative thought as you would a statement of a courtroom opponent. This might be called the "think like a lawyer" technique. Here, you examine the thoughts for their accuracy. You question the evidence in favor and against the thought. Ask yourself for alternative evidence to explain the event that gives rise to the thought. Use the results of this questioning to write a more accurate statement.

Example: A student thinks she has lost the respect of her classmates because she was not able to remember the question a case posed. The negative automatic thought is, "No one respects me." But she is unable to identify behavioral changes in how her classmates relate to her. She is unable to recall any situation in which a classmate flubbed an answer and she or others responded by losing respect for the classmate. Her response might be, "There is no evidence that missing a detail like this leads to a lack of respect by others."

d. *Shades of gray.* Another technique is to frame the situation in shades of gray. This is a great technique if you fall into black-and-white thinking about a situation. Suppose, for example, you try to extend your range as a teacher or administrator, get something wrong and conclude "I can't do this at all." You can start by thinking of who really can’t do the task at all: perhaps someone who lacks the knowledge or ability to take on the task, cannot relate to others, and so on. You're clearly not him. Now think of someone who is great on the first try, the quickest learner imaginable, with a skill set that fits the task perfectly. You’re not her, either. This exercise should lead you to conclude that, like almost everyone, you're somewhere in the middle.

Realizing you are not the best can be emotionally freeing: it means you don’t have to try to be perfect. You’ll make mistakes, and can learn from them.

For students, a negative thought for which shades of grey works well is some variant of "I'm the worst student in the school." You can ask him to think of the
actual worst student, who has probably already left the program - and then ask him to think of the best student.

  e. **Semantic technique.** Reframe "should" or "have to" or "must" as "It would be nice to" or "I would prefer to." Why do this? It recognizes autonomy and choice - and the fact that sometimes we can't reach a goal.

  We include as Appendix A a list of common cognitive distortions/unhelpful thoughts.

**10. Exercise three: Double standard and think like a lawyer**

We created a thought log that incorporates some common responses to exercise one (i.e., imagine your experience after being called on in during the first week of law school). Using the "double standard" and "think like a lawyer" techniques, write an alternate response or reframe the automatic thought. We reframed the first negative automatic thought as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event: Cold-call in class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Automatic Thought(s)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I gave the worst answer ever&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| "They think I am an idiot" | |

**11. Reframing techniques for maladaptive (but possibly true) thoughts**

  a. **Is this thought helpful?** Sometimes a negative, automatic thought may be true, but unhelpful to dwell on. For example, your mind keeps recalling a task on
which you performed poorly. You can generate a list of the reasons it is and isn’t useful to dwell on the mistake, and then respond by telling yourself, "While it is true that I performed poorly, it was one task and this is not a useful thought.”

b. *Can I live with that?* Sometimes the automatic thought may be accurate, but the implications are exaggerated. For example, you might accurately think you will not get an offer from a firm or agency with which you just finished clerking and assume, without examination, that event will be devastating. Ask yourself whether you could survive not receiving the offer? Will your friends abandon you? Will all employers reject you on that basis? You will probably conclude you can live with the failure. This strategy will reveal that even if your fears are realized, you can live with the outcome.

12. **Exercise four: Practice**

1) Examine the Reframing Techniques Handout. Use one of the techniques other than "double standard" or "think like a lawyer" to reframe the automatic thought on the chart below.

2) Most people have one or two "go to" reframing techniques that logically correspond with their pattern of their cognitive distortions. Which technique(s) resonates most with you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Automatic Thought(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I'll never be good at this.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Exercise five: More practice

This week, notice unpleasant or challenging events that trigger negative automatic thoughts. List the automatic thought(s) and add the corresponding emotions, physical sensations, and behaviors that occurred in response to your negative automatic thoughts. Try out the reframing techniques using the thought record below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Automatic Thought(s) (e.g., “I made a fool of myself”)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


14. Practice not perfection: Exercise six

Learning to reframe is like learning a new dance move or exercise. It is hard at first, and can seem unnatural. The more you practice, the easier it comes. At first, the observable benefits may be slight; perhaps minimally improving anxiety. That’s great! If you can alter your emotion just a bit, the cumulative effect will be much more. Rejecting this tool because "it doesn’t solve my problem" is an example of all-or-nothing thinking. This time, rate your emotion on a 0-10 scale before and after you reframe your thoughts and notice any (even slight) improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Automatic Thought(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., “I looked like an idiot”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Reframing tip

Often, one negative automatic thought will come up repeatedly. You can help yourself be prepared for the thought by reframing and saying the reframe out loud. You can also write the reframe down and put it in your purse or wallet, or enter it onto the Notes section of a smart phone, so it is always handy.

16. When the perfect ideal smothers learning...

One reason learning can be a particularly anxiety ridden process in law is that, in practice at least, errors and knowledge gaps are perceived to have unacceptably high consequences. What law student wouldn’t want to be a perfect lawyer? Striving for excellence is important for law students, as it is for faculty or administrators in the field. Aiming for a high standard can be motivating, unless it is accompanied by inability to accept oneself or others “as is” at any point on the path towards that standard. Striving for perfection causes anxiety and depression when it is accompanied by a sense of self-worth that is contingent on obtaining it. Lawyers with a sense of self-worth that is contingent on obtaining an often-impossible perfect standard are likely to treat themselves and others harshly in unavoidable circumstances when they and other people fall short of perfection. This is often accompanied by a feeling that one’s actual knowledge level or status on any parameter must be hidden to avoid harsh judgment from others. These two factors, 1) contingent self-worth and 2) perceived need to hide, lead to significant psychopathology including marked anxiety and depression symptoms.

In addition, a student with contingent self-worth and perceived need to hide will not feel at all free to engage in discussions or other opportunities to learn whenever recognizing knowledge gaps and errors are essential to the learning process. Psychologist Carol Dweck and others have shown that perfectionism can get in the way of learning. Students who are rewarded, and judge themselves, on effort, rather than results, perform better.

Legal educators can help students use cognitive reframing to recognize and replace self-talk with healthier alternatives when “contingent self-worth” and “perceived need to hide” threaten to smother their learning. Your cognitive reframing instructors can show you how to practice specific scenarios to help students with these emotional health promoting skills.

17. Reframing stress

a. Good forms of stress. We are accustomed to thinking about stress negatively. Those of us who do not learn how to deal with stress can find that it leads to the downward spiral of negative emotions, physical sensations and behavior described above, and perhaps even health problems. However, stress can
also be useful. It can improve attention and performance, in part through production of adrenaline.

So stress can help a tired law student or lawyer concentrate on an important task, and some can emerge from a stressful experience feeling stronger.

b. Stress acts a lot like excitement. The physiology of stress is quite similar to the physiology of excitement. To understand how that can be so, imagine you are about to start a race. You feel a jolt of adrenaline; feel your heart pumping; you are hyper-focused, taking in everything about those around you. Those are some of the same feelings you may get when you take a test or present an oral argument.

c. Benefits of positive appraisals of stress. One way to reconcile the negative and positive forms of stress is to conclude, as have many researchers, that the impact of stress depends in part on how you think about stress. Building on the work of Carol Dweck, Crum and colleagues introduced the concept of stress mindset – stress-is-enhancing mindset or stress-is-debilitating mindset. They proposed that people who believe that stress can be positive by increasing attention, alertness and performance will experience more positive health and behavioral outcomes. In contrast, the belief that stress-is-debilitating has been associated with poorer physical and emotional health.

In one series of recent experiments, emotion and behavior during stress was correlated with attitude toward stress. The more subjects associated stress with low emotion and poor achievement, the more negative stress was to mental health and achievement. Significantly, exposing subjects to the information about the good effects of stress on concentration and emotional resilience changed attitudes toward stress. Subjects that received this information thought better about stress performed better under stress and had better mental health outcomes.

In short, reframing or reappraising how one thinks about stress can change the impact of stress.

d. Learning to reframe how you think about stress. We have spent the bulk of our time identifying the negative effects of stress and giving you cognitive framing so you can deal with those effects. Now you have those tools, and if you practice them, the negative effects will not be as significant. You can now experience the positive elements of stress - the jolt of adrenalin, associated with improved attention, and the role of stress in increasing resilience. You can think of stress like a wave that you can now surf.

To make stress work for you, though, you may have to change your mindset toward it. Here’s one last cognitive reframing exercise, this one on the role of stress.
18. Exercise seven

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Automatic Thought(s)</th>
<th>Cognitive Distortion(s)</th>
<th>Reframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I always fail when stressed”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. The behavioral model of anxiety: Anxiety leads to avoidance

a. Generally. We noted above that negative automatic thoughts lead to distressing emotions, unpleasant physical sensations, and maladaptive behavioral responses. For example, thoughts such as "I'm going to fail" can cause anxiety and unhealthy coping such as excessive substance use. Perhaps the most common behavioral response to anxiety is avoidance. Review your responses to exercise one. If you were like most students, those responses including some form of avoidance behavior. If you think you can’t ask questions under pressure and are anxious about speaking up in a group, you remain silent or call in sick.

In the short run, this strategy is effective because the level of anxiety decreases once you’ve decided to avoid. In the long run, avoidance increases the levels of anxiety and keeps people from accomplishing their life goals. When you avoid, you give strength to the negative thoughts that produce the anxiety; conversely, you don’t give yourself an opportunity to see that the negative thoughts were false. And, of course, you don’t learn the answers to the questions you didn’t ask.

Anxiety is best changed with the addition of graduated exposure or behavioral practice. First, people notice that often the anxiety experienced during the event is not as terrible as they feared. Second, they notice that anxiety generally dissipates quickly. Third, they learn that they can accomplish behavioral goals while anxious. These successes add to their evidence that challenges their cognitive distortions.

Change builds on success. A student who has difficulty speaking in class might first practice or role play with a friend. For example, ask a student a non-substantive question before class, then a substantive question, and repeat with a small group of students and so on.

b. Teaching students behavioral tools. Our workshop focuses primarily on cognitive reframing. However, it is beneficial to discuss how behavioral changes reduce anxiety. Fortunately, exposure or behavioral practice has a common-sense intuition at its core: forcing yourself to try something that is anxiety-provoking can
be the best way to get over anxiety. Expressions such as "get back on the horse [after a fall]" "jump in the water [to learn to swim]" reflect this intuition.

One approach, taken in the Stanford and Yale Law School courses, was to first ask students whether there are behavioral changes that might help. Some students are sure to respond by giving some variant of exposure. They'll say things like "I try to make myself speak, and then realize it isn't so tough."

This will give you an opportunity to talk about graduated exposure.

Students will no doubt come up with other behavioral approaches. These may include talking to a friend or family member, exercise, meditation or mindfulness. While these approaches are not the focus of our workshop, they can be supported and praised as having shown some efficacy.

c. Framing the exposure. A way to think about the exposure that many find effective is "I can do hard things." This emphasizes individual agency and puts an optimistic frame on the activity.

20. Other approaches (and resources) to deal with anxiety.

This memo focuses on the technique of Cognitive Reframing to reduce anxiety. There other approaches and techniques that have been shown to be effective in reducing anxiety. These include mindfulness and related techniques, and exercise. We focus on the Cognitive Model and Reframing because we believe it will be new to many, it can be presented in a short course such as this, and it falls within our own set of interests and expertise. We would be happy to talk with instructors about other techniques, and to suggest resources for those techniques.

21. Referrals and safety information

Students may ask about therapy or disclose mental health concerns. Communicate empathy and support and direct them to your student psychological services. If a student discloses life-threatening behaviors, call 911.

22. Exercise seven: Referral and emergency numbers

Write down below and at the end of this packet the numbers of your campus Counseling and Psychological Services, Dean of Students, or the designated student mental health services for your law school and the number to call in an emergency 911.

**EMERGENCY NUMBERS:**
23. Generally

Below we outline and then detail a teaching plan that largely follows the course taught successfully by Barbara Fried at Stanford Law School. It is not necessary, or even desirable, that you follow this template. You know your students best, and the course you teach should be a course taught in your own voice. This is not only a truism about good teaching in general, it reflects one strand of student response to the Stanford course. What impressed many students the most was the sincerity of their teacher. You’ll come across as most sincere when you restate things in your own words, and deviate from the template in ways that reflect your own views.

24. Broad outline of Stanford course/recommended course

The recommended course is taught in 2-1/2 sessions. The first session began with a self-revelation from the instructor of the impact of anxiety on her own performance as a law student and lawyer. That, combined with the data provided in 2, above, on the impact of anxiety on law students and lawyers, was given as a motivation for the course.

The Stanford course then went to exercise one, which helps identify the cognitive-behavioral model of anxiety. The session used the responses to cover the material chapters 1-8 in PART ONE, above. After that, at the end of the session, students were then given their own set of materials that provide an abbreviated version of PART ONE above, and that contained referral information for students who wanted to see a mental health professional. They were asked to read those materials before the second session and to complete the exercises in the materials.

The second session covered the remainder of the material in PART ONE, above. The session was a mix of brief lecture and discussion. Lecture consisted of reviewing concepts such as cognitive reframing; discussion was centered on student answers to the exercises. At the end of the second session, students were given a brief set of materials with follow-up exercises, one-line sites with exercises, and reading.

The final session briefly reviewed the students’ experience in using the techniques.

We provide a more detailed course template below, along with a set of materials to be distributed to students.
25. Detailed outline of Stanford course/recommended course: First class

a. How to use this outline. The outline we provide below is keyed to Part One of this memo. We suggest that as you read the outline, you have a copy of Part One in front of you.

b. Self-revelation. The instructor begins by giving an example of his/her own experience with anxiety in law school. Ideally, this would involve a set of negative thoughts leading to negative emotions, physiological sensations, and behavioral reactions. In anonymous surveys, students stated this reveal was one of the most powerful parts of the course. Why? Because it helped “normalize” anxiety. Individuals with anxiety often feel they must hide that anxiety from others. The thought of talking about anxiety fills them with emotions of embarrassment, shame, and...anxiety! That is unfortunate because talking about anxiety can be a first step to reducing anxiety. For one thing, it allows a friend to offer a reframe, as discussed above. Hearing that their professor had anxiety and is willing to talk about it made it easier for the students to do the same.

c. Go through exercise one, above, with the class. The instructor now leads the class through exercise one, above. Students are asked to have pen and paper handy.

i. Setting the stage. Begin by giving some variant of the first class cold call. A general version, taken verbatim from exercise one, is listed below. You should feel free to modify it to make it seem as real as possible.

Imagine your professor has just raised a case name and is looking around the room to cold call someone. You feel yourself getting nervous as his eyes move in your direction. You've been chosen! He asks you to summarize the case.

You throw open your casebook to about where the case is, to look at the case and your notes. You see yourself looking at a case you haven't read; you've gone too far. You thumb back a few pages - still too far. You start flipping pages backward. Now you've passed it. You think to yourself, “This is ridiculous, I'm taking forever.” You decide to take a stab at the case from memory. Your voice sounds shrill and tinny as you struggle through your answer. You see everyone look your way. Your face feels flushed.

The professor nods and you heave a sigh of relief, but then hear a follow-up question, “What do you think the court was really getting at?”

You think, “What does he mean by, ‘really’?” Had you stated the issue and gotten it wrong? You think, “Be precise, be precise.” You see everyone is still looking at you. You incongruously notice the nails of the student two rows in front.
The professor calls on another student who has raised her hand.

ii. Ask students to write down their thoughts but not their name on a piece of paper. Ask students who feel comfortable to turn in that piece of paper. Read the thoughts and write them on the board. (You might alternatively ask students who feel comfortable to share their thoughts orally.) If, as is extremely likely, the thoughts center on one or two themes, comment on that.

iii. Ask students to write down their emotions. This can be a surprisingly hard task for some. Lawyers and law students tend to be quite cognitive, and more in touch with thoughts than emotions. You can point out that emotions finish a sentence that begins with “I feel” and give a few basic examples. Again, ask students who feel comfortable with handing in the paper with their emotions (but not their name) to do so. Read the contributions and write some of them on the board.

iv. Ask students to write down physiological sensations. Follow the above protocol in collecting responses from students who feel comfortable handing them in, and reading and writing the responses on the board.

v. Ask students to write down behavioral reactions or urges if any were experienced (e.g., urge to flee the classroom, downturned eye gaze, fidgeting). Follow the above protocol in collecting responses from students who feel comfortable handing them in, and reading and writing the responses on the board.

iv. Importance of this exercise. This exercise helps set the stage for the rest of the course. It also helps normalize anxiety, as students hear that other students have similar reactions to cold calling and other anxiety situations. This latter benefit (normalization through peer statements) was the single-most praised part of the course, on student surveys. As one student put it, “More than anything, I loved the opportunity to see that everyone else is feeling the same thing and talk openly about something I’ve thought about a ton but never really discuss with anyone.”

d. Introduce the Cognitive Model of Anxiety. The instructor now introduces the Cognitive Model of Anxiety. Essentially, the instructor here is simply following Part One of this memo; the cold-calling exercise is 4, above; the Cognitive Model is 5, above. The Cognitive Model states that negative thoughts lead to emotions, physiological sensations and behavioral reactions. You can point out that the negative thoughts don’t have to be “correct” to have an effect. You can point out that one negative thought (and the attendant emotions) seem to prime an individual for a second negative thought, leading to a downward spiral of negative thoughts and emotions.

e. Introduce the concept of Cognitive Distortions and Maladaptive Thoughts. Here, you continue to follow the presentation in Part One of this memo; the Cognitive Model is 5, above; you are now presenting the material in 6 and 7
above. You point out that the negative thoughts that fuel anxiety come automatically, without deliberation, and are often irrational. You give each student a copy of Appendix A, on Cognitive Distortions and Maladaptive Thoughts.

Give the students a few minutes to look at the memo, and then ask if they recognize any of these patterns in their own thoughts. It is virtually certain that students will nod.

Note that some negative thoughts aren't false – they are simply maladaptive. Go through the example at the bottom of the memo you just handed out, or from Part One, 7, above.

Pick out a negative thought from exercise one that you wrote on the board. Ask students which of the cognitive distortions underlie the thought. Here, you are again following the outline in Part One, now at 8 above. You'll probably get volunteers, who will come up with different answers. You can point out that the categories of cognitive distortions often overlap. If you don't get volunteers (unlikely, in our opinion) you can review this yourself.

*f. Solicit student suggestions on how to break this downward spiral/cycle.* The instructor now asks students to write down approaches they'd used to break the downward spiral of thoughts and emotions. The instructor then asked students who felt comfortable to share their responses.

You now write those responses on the board, but don't erase everything you've already written. Leave some of the representative thoughts, emotions, physiological sensations, and behavioral responses to exercise one on the board. In the Stanford course, one set of responses consisted of behavioral coping devices. Some students suggested exercise (e.g., running, swimming) as responses that worked; others listened to music. A related set of responses consisted of behavioral responses that more directly addressed the problem. For example, students mentioned talking to the professor, or trying to speak in class again, to get used to (and better at) the experience.

Another set of responses centered on, or at least suggested, some form of cognitive reframing. For example, students reported it helpful to talk to a friend or their mother. The instructor followed up here, asking how talking to someone could help. Students stated that the friend/relative could show them another way to look at it and/or help them get perspective by reminding them of their strengths.

A final set of responses included such techniques as mindfulness, meditation and prayer.

In the opinion of the authors, it is virtually certain that you will get many of the same responses that were given at Stanford. You can then point out that the responses fall into certain categories and that in the reading for the next
class you will focus on responses that help you rethink/reframe your negative thoughts.

g. Set up the next class. You have already introduced an example of anxiety induced by a stressful classroom situation (i.e., cold calling). During the next class, you will teach students one strategy, cognitive reframing, to challenge their negative thoughts and corresponding emotions, physical sensations, and behavioral reactions. You can now ask the class if they can think of other anxiety situations. One example you will present in the next class will be asking a professor or partner for help understanding and getting started on a written assignment.

Note: Before you leave the classroom, make sure you copy from your board some representative responses to Exercise one, and suggestions on how to deal with anxiety.

26. Detailed outline of second class

a. Generally. At this point, the class will have read the student memo, attached here Appendix B. The student memo is substantively identical to Part One of this memo. It differs only in the following ways: It is addressed to students and it assumes you have presented sections 1-8 of Part One, above, and so summarizes those parts; and, it describes the anxiety situation you noted at the end of class one - a student or law firm clerk who is having trouble understanding and getting started on a written assignment.

You will begin this class, naturally, by asking for thoughts or comments on the last class. You will then simply pick up where you left off. You have already covered sections 1-8 of the material on Part One of this memo. You now begin by going over the material on section 9 of Part One of this memo.

You set the stage for this discussion by writing on the board a summary of exercise one: Under the heading cold call you can write down a few representative thoughts, emotions and physiological sensations, and behavioral reactions students reported.

b. Introduce cognitive reframing.

i. Stress the fact it is possible, with practice, to change our automatic thoughts. We sometimes think “I can’t help how I think.” The truth is, we can change our thoughts. We can hear automatic negative thoughts and challenge them, and reframe situations.

ii. Acknowledge student contributions from last class that involved something like cognitive reframing. Odds are, some students in the previous class offered something like reframing as a technique to stop the downward spiral of the anxiety cycle. If so, this is a nice opportunity to acknowledge those contributions.
iii. Complete at least two of reframing techniques offered in Part 9 of Section One of this memo. These include simply being aware of cognitive distortions, and the techniques of tell a friend/double standard, think like a lawyer, and shades of gray. Your teaching style will determine how you present this material. One approach is to describe a technique and then ask for a way that a technique could reframe one of the negative thoughts/cognitive distortions from exercise one that you have already written on the board.

The student version of Part One of this memo contains exercises that require the use of these reframing techniques. Another approach is to ask students if they would share any of their answers.

c. Emphasize the need for practice and acceptance of gradual progress. Here, you are giving students the information you got in section 16 of Part One of this memo. Reframing might reduce the problem just a bit, but that might be enough for a student’s other coping abilities to manage the rest of the problem. Moreover, reframing is a kind of exercise: the more you do the better you get at it, and the more effective it is.

d. Introduce second hypothetical and exercise. Not all students find cold calling anxiety-provoking. For that reason, we introduce the following second hypothetical in the student memo. The hypothetical picks up another source of anxiety – asking a “superior” for help or clarification. We believe maladaptive behavioral responses to this situation (e.g., procrastination, avoidance) hurt both law students and new lawyers.

The hypothetical is as follows:

You are working as a research assistant for a professor or as a summer clerk at a firm or agency. You are asked to write a brief memo on a few issues. You don’t completely understand the first issue when it is presented to you but you don’t say anything. You figure you can resolve the ambiguity when you start your research.

That evening, you spend an hour or so researching the first issue and still don’t understand it. You consider moving on to the next issue, but worry that the issues may be related, so if you don’t know the first issue, you might get the second issue wrong. You decide to call it a night and see if things seem clearer in the morning.

The next day, you decide to focus on all the other work you have – to get it out of the way. The following day, you spend a few minutes on the first issue, are again confused, and decide to talk to your roommate about it that evening.

The following day is a weekend and you decide to go the beach with friends. You tell yourself time off will do you good.
Exercise: Assume your professor or employer has just given you the task and you are confused about the first issue. You consider asking her for clarification but you don’t. What thoughts lead you to not ask her? What thoughts lead you to not ask her on day 3?

It is up to you how much time you devote to this hypothetical. You can simply refer to the hypothetical, which is in the student memo, and ask students if it resonated with them. You can then state that the same reframing techniques that you introduced can be applied to that situation. You can more ambitiously review this hypothetical in the way you presented exercise one: collect student’s thoughts, identify cognitive distortions, and ask students to come up with reframes. Finally, you can note that this hypothetical illustrates some behavioral response to anxiety – namely, avoidance and procrastination.

e. reframing stress. Here, you teach material that you have learned in section 17, of Part One of this memo, and that students have been exposed to in the student memo. You'll want to make the following points.

i. Stress is inevitable. Cognitive distortions fuel unnecessary anxiety. Some stress, however, is inevitable.

ii. Stress can be good. Anxiety associated with stressful events can stimulate physiological reactions that sharpen focus and attention and contribute to learning. Physiologically, anxiety acts a lot like excitement.

iii. To a certain extent, the effects of stress depend on how you frame stress. Recent studies indicate that the effects of stress on emotion and health depend on how stressful events are interpreted. Those who view stress as a positive don’t seem to suffer from stressful situations; the reverse is true for those who think that stress will hurt them and prevent them from functioning.

iv. Students can learn to reframe stress. Studies also show that attitudes toward stress aren’t fixed; people who are informed of the beneficial aspects of stress can change their attitude toward stress and manage stressful events better.

At this point, students have read something on the beneficial aspects of stress and have been given an exercise on reframing. You can ask students if they would share a reframe of stress. (Note this is the same exercise that you reviewed in part 17, of Section One of this memo)

f. Behavioral manifestations and responses to anxiety. Section 19, of Part One of this memo, introduces the benefits of using behavioral practice/graduated exposure to reduce anxiety. It is possible that someone might have brought the relationship between anxiety and avoidance in exercise one, either by mentioning avoidance as a thought (e.g., I’ll never speak in class again) or by
mentioning behavioral practice/graduated exposure as a technique to stop the downward cycle of anxiety (e.g., force yourself to keep speaking in class). If that is true in your workshop, you can incorporate and refer to that contribution in your discussion.