

Skate Through the Quake



CBT Skills for Anxiety and Stress Management after the Christchurch 2010 Earthquake



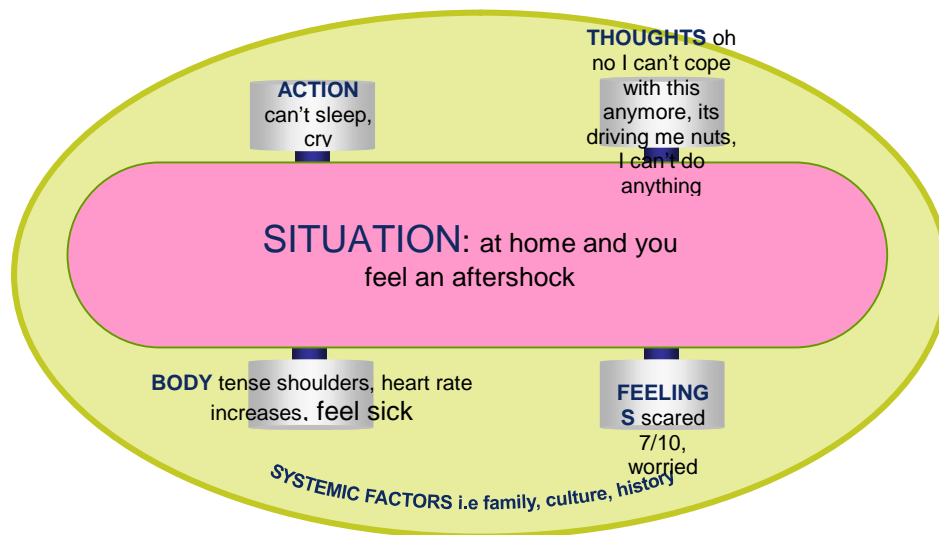
Hi, have you been feeling really scared, worried, tense and on edge since the earthquake? Well Tommy and I are going to help you skate through the quake so you can feel less anxious, more calm and more in control. We use a skateboard to teach the skills.

1. **Normalise** - it is totally expected to have more anxiety at the moment
2. **Feelings** - check out what feelings you have
3. **Body** - what is happening inside and practice the 3 tools (3-4-5, squeeze release and chill space)
4. **Thoughts** - replace freaked out thoughts with calming, coping thoughts
5. **Actions** - make a list of all the things you can do to relax and calm you

The Skateboard has a deck and 4 wheels. The deck is any anxious situation (an aftershock, someone making a sudden noise, going to bed at

night). The four wheels are thoughts, feelings, body responses and actions. Every time a scary situation happens you have a reaction in all of those four wheels.

Example of skateboard:



This is a scary ride you're having and one you don't want to be having but maybe you don't think you have any other way of coping. You CAN have a calmer ride and you are in control of which way your ride goes. Watch.

1. Totally Normal:

Nearly everyone in Christchurch is having a really bumpy yuck ride at the moment. People are tense, can't sleep, scared by after shocks and worry what is going to happen to them, their houses, friends, school etc. The body is trained to react like this to fear situations (flight, fight or freeze) and when it goes on for a while you get the other symptoms of too much adrenalin in your body and anxious thoughts in your head. If you've had anxiety or stress problems before you can expect a harder ride at the moment because you have double the problems with handling your anxiety skateboard.

SO remember: it's kind of normal to be feeling this right now. Go easy on yourself. Write this down and stick it on your wall or send yourself a text reminder.

2. Emotions; check in with yourself, which emotions you are feeling; anxious, scared, worried, down, angry. Think about how much anxiety you feel in different situations. Like 0 is no anxiety at all and 10 is really really anxious. Think about situations that bring your anxiety (or other

feelings) to lower numbers like doing fun stuff, hanging out with friends etc. We can't change our 4emotion wheel but you can adjust the thoughts, body and action wheels to make the emotion wheel feel less anxious.

3. Body: our body reacts to fear situations in different ways, sweaty, chills, nauseous, tension, increased heart rate, tingling fingers and toes. Remember back to the last aftershock you felt and recall what you felt in your body? What helps that feeling go away? Sometimes these things help; breathing, lying down, going for a walk, listening to music, distracting ourselves by doing something, or talking to someone. These are all great. Sometimes people use smoking, drinking, overeating etc, which might help in the short term but has some other problems attached to this coping style.

Here are 3 REALLY useful PROVEN techniques to help with anxiety:

- A. Breathing 3-4-5. Where ever you are, stop, think about your breathing, put your hand on your tummy to make sure you're breathing out using your tummy not your chest (way more relaxing, bigger space). Then breathe in gently for 3 counts, hold your breathe for 4 counts and slowly breathe out for 5 counts. Holding and taking longer to breathe out slows the heart rate down which makes you more relaxed. Do this 3 times. Try it, practice it heaps. Use it anytime a situation triggers your body wheel to tighten and tense up.
- B. Tighten and Release. This works on your muscles, excellent for helping with sleep. Lie down, do the 3-4-5 breathing 3x. Then tighten and release your toes (3x), calves, thigh, butt, stomach, chest, shoulders, hands, lower and upper arms, neck and finally screw up your face (not to be done in public perhaps 😊) and release. Tighten the muscles like you're a robot then let them flop like a rag doll.
- C. Chilled Place. This is visualising a cool, calming place where you feel chilled out, no worries in the world and totally safe. Imagine a place or think of a place you go to where you feel really relaxed. Imagine getting yourself there (driving, flying, spaceship whatever), arriving, what does the place look like, what do you see, hear, smell, touch and even taste when you are there. Imagine all these details. Imagine that when you are there you are safe, calm, chilled! You can go there anytime in your head when you are feeling anxious. Good for before bed, during the night or when you're alone and feeling scared.

Ok, got the Normalising thing happening, emotion wheel turning for different situations, 3 body wheel tools. Excellent, stay with us, you're doing well and you are getting in charge of your worries and fears. You have to remember to pat yourself on your back on this ride. Cos you are doing it!!!!

Now we are onto the thinking wheel.

4. Thoughts. When something freaks you out like going to bed at night you might have thoughts like "oh I so can't go to bed by myself, I won't get to sleep, what if there is another quake". When your thought wheel has this your scary feelings might be 9/10 and your body wheel could be frozen up with tension. This ain't gonna be smooth ride! You have to get in there take the thought wheel off and give it some other options which can help bring your worries down and chill you out. Try things like: *hey I have lived through 200 odd aftershocks and I can live through another, the shocks are getting less often and less frequent (fact!!), I will be ok, I will get through the night.*

Imagine what saying this to yourself might do to your other wheels? I bet it could bring them down to a more chilled ride.

Another good thought tester is this one. Write down:

What is the worst that could happen?

What is the best that could happen?

What is the most likely?

OK well done, I hope you are feeling like you have some awesome tools to help your chilled ride.

5. Actions - these are the behaviours you do, some help you and some make situations worse. Check this out; you hear a rumble down the street. You could run to your room, jump on your bed, shake in the corner and scream really loudly. What will that do to your anxious feelings? Skyrocket I imagine. Now see yourself waiting, listening to what happens, seeing if you feel any shocks, do some 3-4-5 breathing, say to your self I'm going to be ok, put on some chill music, text your friend about how well you coped, high 5 mum and having a milo. What will this do to your anxiety ratings? Squish them I could 100% guarantee, well not totally because you need to be a little chilled and you WILL have a better ride.

Make a list of all the things you can do which relax you, distract you, are things you are good at doing, soothe and calm you. Write things you can do on your own, with others, during the day and at night.

OK totally amazing work. You have now successfully fueled up your quake tool box so that you can skate through the quake zone with confidence and calmness.

So you have:

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Ok I hope this is helpful. Talk about this with your friend/s, parents/family so they can help remind you to do these things as well as give you praise or treats when you are coping and being brave.

Contact your school guidance counsellor or talk to your parents about seeing your family doctor if you find you are still really struggling to cope. It is expected that people can have higher levels of anxiety for several months after the quake.

This information is collated from the following:

Barrett, P. (2005) Friends for Life Workbook, Cargo, T. & Coleman, N (2006), Skate into Skills, Friedberg, R.D. & McClure (2003) & Clinical Practice of Cognitive Therapy with Children and Adolescents.

Nikki Coleman, CBT Therapist and Lecturer, 396 Colombo St, Sydenham, 021 1670595, nikkicole@extra.co.nz