

#### 4 MORE WAYS TO OVERCOME SCARY THOUGHTS

- 1) Motivational Model – This model helps to improve your motivation for change. Identify a moment in time when you had a scary thought that made you feel really anxious.
  - a. Rate how much anxiety you felt from 0-100, with 100 being the highest.
  - b. Before working to get rid of the anxiety, honor the anxiety by identifying how it is beneficial or even shows something about you that is really positive
  - c. E.g.,
    - i. The anxiety keeps me alert and on guard, so I can protect my baby from harm
    - ii. The anxiety shows I really care about my baby’s well-being
    - iii. Anxiety shows how I really don’t want to have these scary thoughts and want a quality of life with my family
    - iv. If I let my guard down something bad will happen, anxiety is helping me make sure everything is okay.
  - d. Write back to these benefits and give reasons as to why you would still want to turn down the anxiety, despite the benefits that it is providing you.
    - i. E.g., even though the anxiety keeps me alert, I don’t need it to be that high to protect my baby. At that level it may even affect my sleep and functioning and I’m less able to protect the baby.
  - e. You can do the same thing with depression and many other negative emotions.
- 2) Cognitive Model – This model helps to change your negative thinking so you can improve your mood. Scary thoughts that disturb you will not lead to harm to the baby. There are many techniques in this model, and here is just one of them. It works well for some.
  - a. Imagine you’re talking to a dear friend who is exactly like you in every way. Write down what you would say to this dear friend who is struggling with scary thoughts, hates themselves for it, and think their baby would be better off with someone else.
  - b. Write what you’d say to your friend with anxious thoughts about their baby’s well-being and ability to make it. Make sure they’re words you really mean.
  - c. If the friend is like you in every way, could the thoughts you wrote apply to you too?
- 3) Exposure Model – This model states scary thoughts are coming about because we are avoiding something we need to face. Ask yourself, what is it that I’m avoiding?
  - a. E.g., For some this is engaging more with the baby alone, starting at 20 minutes a day then slowly increasing the duration. It’ll increase your anxiety initially but will eventually show you that you and the baby will be okay and that you can do this.
- 4) Hidden Emotion Model – This model states that the scary thoughts are coming about because something is bothering you in the here-and-now, but you’re sweeping this emotion or desire under the rug because you don’t think it is okay. Once you find out what the hidden emotion or desire is, you have to do something about it (e.g., talk about it, change your circumstances). Reveal the hidden emotion, anxiety decreases, and scary thoughts go away.
  - a. These are examples with potential solutions that could work for you.
    - i. You’re grieving your old life – (talk about this grief, this is a common experience)
    - ii. You’re angry at the baby because you can’t get 20 minutes to yourself (share your feelings and know anger is normal; you’re exhausted, this is hard)
    - iii. You’re upset at your husband for not helping as much (talk to him)
    - iv. You don’t want to be a stay at home mom (find a balance that works for you)