

# Knock Down Anxiety

<b>TOPIC</b>	Anxiety
<b>RATIONALE</b>	Adolescents are often overwhelmed by anxiety, which can prevent them from enjoying new experiences. This intervention uses a familiar game to help the client identify irrational beliefs related to anxiety and then dispute them.
<b>MATERIALS</b>	A stacking block game such as Jenga or Tumbling Towers A set of Knock Down Anxiety Cards 15–20 blank index cards A pen or pencil
<b>PREPARATIONS</b>	Copy the Knock Down Anxiety Card page, glue it to tagboard, then cut the cards apart.
<b>PROCEDURE</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. When the client begins to discuss something he is anxious about, help him identify some specific thoughts that lead to his anxiety. For example, if he is anxious about giving a speech in English class, he might be thinking:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I know I will mess up and embarrass myself, then I will never be able to show my face again.</li><li>• I will be the worst one in the class! I just know it!</li><li>• The other kids will make fun of me.</li></ul></li><li>2. As the two of you are identifying these thoughts, write each one on a blank index card. When you have identified many or most of the client's irrational beliefs related to this first issue, move on to another issue and identify beliefs associated with that problem. Continue this process with other problems related to the client's anxiety.</li><li>3. Next explain that the two of you are going to play a game to help him identify and dispute thoughts that make him feel anxious. Discuss how it is not the events that happen in our lives that cause our anxiety but how we think about those events. For example,</li></ol>

when he has to give a speech in class, instead of assuming that the other kids will make fun of him, he could tell himself that others are probably a little nervous, too, so everyone will be in the same boat. Or he could think that even if someone does make fun of him, it isn't the end of the world because it has happened before and he survived. You might want to have the client practice disputing another thought or two before initiating the play.

4. Then begin the game by asking him to place three blocks flat on the playing surface, adjacent to each other. Then have him place the next three blocks on top of them but in the opposite direction. Have him continue to make layers in this manner until all the blocks are used, creating a tower. When the tower is complete, explain that the two of you will take turns drawing a card with an irrational belief written on it—either one that the two of you identified as he discussed his issues or one of the Knock Down Anxiety Cards, which are more generic in nature but may relate to his issues and give him more practice in disputing in case he didn't identify many of his own anxieties. Before a block is removed from the tower, the irrational belief must be disputed. (By participating in the game, you can model the process.) Stress that blocks cannot be removed from the top level and that any block that is removed has to be placed on the top level. If you are successful, none of the blocks will fall. However, if at any time one of you removes a block and inadvertently knocks down any other blocks, the game is over (depending on time, he can rebuild and start again).
5. When the tower is knocked down, emphasize to the client how he can knock down his anxiety by not thinking that the worst will happen or assuming things without checking out the facts. But even when something he is anxious about actually does happen, ask him if it was as awful as he thought it might be. Point out that the tower that was knocked down can be rebuilt and that when he gets anxious about something, he can "rebuild" by disputing his irrational thinking, which will help him be less anxious.

## Knock Down Anxiety Cards

<p>It's awful that I have to do homework every single night.</p>	<p>This is the worst thing that could ever happen!</p>
<p>A good friend should always keep your secrets.</p>	<p>I will never understand this subject.</p>
<p>It's not fair that my parents expect me to get all As and Bs.</p>	<p>I just know that everyone will laugh at me.</p>
<p>I can't stand the way they treat me!</p>	<p>I can't do anything right.</p>
<p>I should have gotten a perfect score on my test.</p>	<p>There is no point in trying.</p>
<p>If I don't get an A, I am a loser.</p>	<p>If I am not accepted by my peers, then I do not count.</p>