

A free workbook from
DR. JAIME BERCUSON, PSYD

The High-Functioning Anxiety Toolkit

A 12-page workbook for the woman who's running on adrenaline
and pretending it's discipline.

Five science-backed tools you can use today.

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Online therapy for high-achieving women · UT · CA · FL

WELCOME

If you're holding this toolkit, here's what I want you to know.

I'm Dr. Jaime Bercuson, a licensed clinical psychologist. I work with high-achieving women — the ones who look fine on the outside and are white-knuckling on the inside. The promotion comes. The to-do list gets done. And the quiet thrum of *something is wrong* never quite goes away.

If that sounds familiar, this toolkit is for you. It's not a substitute for therapy, and it can't fix everything in twelve pages. But the five tools inside are the ones I teach in my first few sessions with most clients — because they work, they're evidence-based, and they're small enough that you can actually use them in a real week of your real life.

Print this. Mark it up. Use a pen, not a stylus. The act of physically writing matters more than I can explain in a paragraph.

"You don't need to push harder. You need to push differently."

If something here lands and you want to do this work with someone, my consult line is at the back of the toolkit. Either way — I'm glad you're here.

With care,

Dr. Jaime Bercuson, PsyD

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HOW TO USE THIS

Don't try to do all five tools at once. Pick one for this week. Use it three times. Then come back for another. The tools build on each other, but they each work alone.

The Sunday-Night Anxiety Reset

If your nervous system starts bracing somewhere around Sunday at 4 p.m. — the dread, the mental rehearsal, the inability to enjoy what's left of the weekend — you're not alone. Anticipatory anxiety is one of the most common patterns in high-achievers, and it's one of the most treatable.

THE STRUCTURE

Block 30 minutes on Sunday between 4 and 7 p.m. Use this same window every week. Bring this worksheet. The point isn't to *solve* the week ahead — it's to externalize what's looping inside, so your brain can let go of holding it.

WHY THIS WORKS

Anxiety thrives on ambiguity. When you put what's worrying you on paper, you're telling your nervous system: *this is being handled, not forgotten*. Combined with naming what's already been done and what's actually in your control, it short-circuits the loop.

Use the worksheet on the next page →

The Sunday-Night Reset

Date _____

01 — What feels heaviest about this coming week?

02 — What is actually within my control?

03 — What is not in my control that I can let go of?

04 — One small thing I want to feel proud of by Friday

05 — One small kindness I will give myself this week

The Worry Window Worksheet

Most worry isn't useful. It feels like productivity, but it's mostly just rumination dressed up in a blazer. The fix isn't *stop worrying* — that doesn't work. The fix is *contain it*.

THE METHOD

Pick a 15-minute window each day. Same time. Same place. When a worry shows up outside the window, you write it on a sticky note (or in your phone) and tell yourself: *I'll handle this at 6:30*. When 6:30 comes, you sit with this worksheet and work through what made the list.

THE TWO QUESTIONS

1. Is this worry productive?

A productive worry has an action attached. *I haven't replied to that email* is productive. *What if I'm secretly bad at my job* is not.

2. Is there anything I can do about it right now?

If yes — do it or schedule it. If no — practice letting it sit. That's the work.

Use the worksheet on the next page →

Worry Window: today's list

Date _____ Window: from _____ to _____

WORRY #01

What's the worry?

Productive? (Y / N)	Action I can take now (write one or 'none')
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WORRY #02

What's the worry?

Productive? (Y / N)	Action I can take now (write one or 'none')
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WORRY #03

What's the worry?

Productive? (Y / N)	Action I can take now (write one or 'none')
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Boundary Scripts for High-Achievers

Most boundary scripts on the internet are still apology scripts in disguise. These aren't. The principle: state the limit, offer one alternative if you mean it, and then stop talking. Over-explaining is where boundaries die.

Declining work without over-explaining

"I can't take that on right now without dropping something else. If you want, I can flag what I'd deprioritize."

When asked to add 'just one more thing' to a full plate

"I want to do that well, which means I can't do it this week. Could we look at next Wednesday?"

When a friend or family member needs more than you have

"I love you and I can't be the one to hold this with you tonight. I can call tomorrow at 7."

Saying no to a meeting that should be an email

"Happy to weigh in — can we do this async? Send me the question and I'll reply by EOD."

When someone reacts poorly to your no

"I hear that this is frustrating. My answer is the same."

Protecting unstructured time on the calendar

"That window is blocked. The next time I have is _____. Want me to grab it?"

The 90-Second Nervous-System Reset

When anxiety spikes, your prefrontal cortex (the rational part) goes briefly offline. No amount of *just calm down* works in that state — you're not in the room. This protocol uses the body to bring the brain back.

00:00 — 00:30

Box breathing.

Inhale 4 counts. Hold 4. Exhale 4. Hold 4. Repeat three full cycles. Make the exhale a little longer than the inhale if you can — that's the part that signals safety.

00:30 — 01:00

Cold water or temperature shift.

Splash cold water on your wrists or face. Hold an ice cube briefly. Or step outside if it's cold out. The temperature change activates the vagus nerve and tells your nervous system the threat is past.

01:00 — 01:30

5-4-3-2-1 grounding.

Name 5 things you see. 4 you can touch. 3 you can hear. 2 you can smell. 1 you can taste. Out loud if you can. This brings you back into the present, where most of what your anxious brain is bracing for isn't actually happening.

If 90 seconds isn't enough, repeat the cycle. This isn't a magic switch — it's a way of telling your body it's safe enough to come back to thinking. Practice it when you're calm, so you have it when you're not.

The Thought Record

This is the single tool I assign most often in a first session. It's classic CBT — boring on the page, often life-changing in practice. The goal isn't to *think positive*. The goal is to think *accurately*.

HOW IT WORKS

Anxiety presents distorted thoughts as facts. The thought record is how you check them against reality. After a few weeks, your brain starts catching the distortions in real time — without the worksheet. That's the goal.

THE COMMON DISTORTIONS TO WATCH FOR

Catastrophizing — assuming the worst case.

Mind-reading — assuming you know what others are thinking.

All-or-nothing thinking — perfect or failure, no middle.

Should statements — the language of internalized impossible standards.

Personalization — assuming everything is about you, or your fault.

Use the worksheet on the next page →

Thought record

Situation	<i>What was happening? Who, what, where, when?</i>
Automatic thought	<i>What went through your head? (the most heated version)</i>
Emotion	<i>Name it. Rate intensity 0–10.</i>
Distortion	<i>Which type from the list? (catastrophizing, mind-reading...)</i>
Evidence FOR the thought	<i>What facts support it?</i>
Evidence AGAINST the thought	<i>What facts don't fit?</i>
More balanced thought	<i>If your closest friend was thinking this, what would you tell her?</i>

NEXT STEPS

If something here landed, let's do this work together.

I offer online therapy for high-achieving women in Utah, California, and Florida. Sessions are warm, evidence-based, and pointed at change — not endless venting.

The first 15 minutes are free. No pressure, no commitment.

[Schedule a Free 15-Minute Consultation →](#)

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This toolkit is informational and not a substitute for therapy. If you are in crisis, call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline).