# **Bonus Worksheets**

# Chapter 1: When Is Illness Anxiety a Problem?

## Assessing the Negative Impact of Your Illness Anxiety

I would like you to take an honest, soul-searching look at how your illness anxiety has negatively affected your life. Following is a checklist to help you identify the negative effects of your illness anxiety. You may need to fill this out over several days, in order to gently and thoughtfully take stock of all the ways that you are negatively affected.

Category	Problems Caused by My Illness Anxiety		
Negative Reaction	Others tell me I worry too much about my health		
of Others	Others get angry or resentful because of my checking for or asking about symptoms		
	☐ I have gotten into arguments with others about illness worries		
	Others have been irritable with me because of my repeated questions about illness worries		
	Others have threatened to cut off contact because of my illness worries		
Feedback from	Others have told me that I have illness issues		
Others	☐ Someone has told me that I should get treatment for my illness worries		
	☐ Someone gave me this book because they think I worry too much about illness		
	Others have told me that I am a hypochondriac		
Negative Effect on	☐ I have had trouble concentrating or doing daily tasks because I am so worried about illness		
My Daily Life	☐ My worries about illness have ruined a vacation or other special occasion		
	☐ I hate having medical appointments because I worry so much ahead of time		
	☐ I have lost sleep or eaten too much/too little because of illness worries		
	☐ My illness worries have made me cry or feel emotional		
	□ I prefer to change the topic of conversation when it turns to illness or death		
	□ I avoid medical-themed shows because they trigger my illness worries		

Checking		When my illness worries get triggered, I check with someone who has medical knowledge or medical experience				
Behaviors		When my illness anxiety gets triggered, I go on the Internet to get more information about illness				
		When my illness anxiety gets triggered, I check my body, or someone else's, to make sure everything is okay				
		I try to disguise my checking for symptoms of illness so I do not annoy others				
		I own medical equipment that I use to check symptoms that alarm me, even when my doctor has not told me to do this				
		I use medical equipment more than others in the same situation				
		I cannot stop myself from talking about what worries me once my illness worries have been triggered				
		I repeatedly check my body in the shower or bath, to make sure I am okay				
		I take pictures of my symptoms each time I check them, so I can make sure they are not getting worse				
Avoidance		I put off medical appointments for fear of getting bad news				
Behaviors		I avoid finding out the results of medical tests for fear of getting bad news				
	☐ I avoid mention of illnesses, death, or dying because they make me worry					
	☐ I avoid places that remind me of illness, death, or dying					
		I avoid activities that make me think about health				
Financial Cost		I have spent money on tests, procedures, or consultations that my doctor did not recommend				
		I have spent money repeating a test because of my worries				
		I have spent money on duplicate medical equipment because of my worries				
Other		I have been reprimanded or lost a job because of absenteeism due to illness anxiety				
		My children have had academic difficulties due to me keeping them home from school in case they are seriously ill				

How did you feel when you went through the checklist above? My guess is that many of these things happen to you on a regular basis. You are suffering, and your suffering is having a negative effect on the people around you.

## Visualization Exercise for Practicing Acceptance

Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down and relax. Picture yourself in the future, noticing an alarming symptom, then taking the time to accept that it is present, noticing that you are feeling and thinking anxiously.

Next, I want you to identify your real enemy, illness anxiety, and remind yourself that you no longer have to do anything but observe without judgment the sensations caused by your anxiety or the symptoms that trigger anxiety. Be like a curious scientist who is observing a new phenomenon for the first time.

Then, take a moment to refocus upon something that you enjoy, something that matters to you (besides your health or the health of someone you love), or something that needs to be done, and to see yourself engaging with this task or thought. Allow your anxiety to naturally subside and remind yourself that your anxiety always misguides you.

Refocus on what really matters in this moment and day. Take the time to feel grateful for what is good about your day, your health, and your life at this moment. When your mind returns to your anxiety, remind yourself that you are only human.
Write down what you learned from taking the time to imagine yourself accepting the presence of your anxious thoughts or images about illness.
Write down what you were able to notice when you accepted and allowed your anxious thoughts to be present without having to react to them? What did it feel like to notice something in the present moment?
Write down one thing that you can be grateful for today.

# Chapter 2: Why Can't I Stop Worrying About My Health?

## Identifying the Negative Reinforcers of Your Illness Anxiety

Think about your personal negative reinforcers. These are all the mental and behavioral activities that you do to try and quickly reduce anxiety about illness, without simply allowing your anxiety to return to baseline of its own accord. Save this list, because you will use it when we work on overcoming your illness anxiety disorder. Below is a sample list of different ways that people with illness anxiety engage in negative reinforcement, to get you started.

- Researching symptoms when I notice a symptom or worry about a symptom
- Asking others for their opinion about a symptom or a disorder
- Repeatedly asking similar questions to my doctor/nurse about a symptom or disorder after they tell me not to worry
- Repeatedly emailing, texting, or calling my doctor/nurse when I am worried about a symptom
- Asking my doctor/nurse for tests, procedures, or surgery when they did not first suggest it
- Calling the after-hours medical hotline to ask about a worrisome symptom because I could not wait until the next open office hours
- Checking with multiple doctors/nurses about the same symptoms and getting extra consultations just to make sure everything is okay
- Repeatedly discussing what my doctor/nurse said to me with others, to make sure it sounds accurate
- Researching the information my doctor/nurse gave me to make sure it's correct
- Getting repeated tests for the same symptom even though the first test result was okay
- Repeatedly checking my body, or that of someone I love, for signs of serious illness, or serious change in illness status
- Repeatedly checking health care information to make sure that I understood it correctly
- Checking my body so much that it gets sore, irritated, or swollen
- If I have a symptom, repeatedly checking it, e.g., checking temperature every fifteen minutes, checking pulses on both sides of neck, both wrists, and both ankles
- Asking my doctor/nurse to check a symptom again after it has already been checked
- Repeatedly checking what I ate or did to make sure that it explains changes in how I feel, e.g., that my sweating is due to eating spicy food, instead of a serious illness

Writing down *your* personal list of negative reinforcers might feel difficult, because you might think of them as your go-to strategies for feeling better. Properly identifying the things that trap you in continued illness anxiety takes courage; and it takes humility to recognize that what you have been doing is counterproductive.

# Ways My Illness Anxiety Makes Me Avoid

Put a check next to the items below that your illness anxiety makes you avoid in order to feel less anxious. Then add any additional items of your own to the list.

I avoid thinking about or saying words that remind me of feared illnesses	I cover my ears, leave the room, or interrupt the conversation when others talk about serious illness		
I avoid attending funerals or visiting hospitals or hospices because they make me so worried	I avoid or delay medical appointments because of my anxiety		
I avoid hearing about fund-raisers for certain illnesses because it triggers my fear	I avoid or delay getting medical tests because of my anxiety		
I turn off the TV or other media if the news contains something about an illness I fear	I cannot finish books that have characters in them that might die of a serious illness		
I avoid religious services that mention death or people dying	I avoid taking any symptom measurements, e.g., blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, breast self-exam, because it scares me		
I avoid looking at my body in the mirror because I fear I will find a serious symptom	I avoid activities that might make me worry about illness, such as exercise, sex, or lifting weights		
I avoid eating certain foods for fear that they will cause me to die from a serious illness, such as cancer or heart disease	I avoid eating foods that might give me symptoms that could be confused with illness, such as caffeinated beverages or spicy foods		
I avoid others who have serious illnesses because it frightens me	I avoid doing things for fear of catching a serious illness		
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

## Identifying Your Worry-Promoting Beliefs

Please write down your worry-promoting beliefs, so you have them on hand to target in treatment. Your long-term goal is to change these unhelpful beliefs into adaptive and helpful ones that allow for the uncertainty of life. Take note of your worry-promoting beliefs from the list below, so you have them on hand to target in treatment. Add any worry-promoting beliefs not listed that trigger your illness anxiety or worry in general.

	People who worry about their health are more likely to prevent a serious illness and are less likely to die from a serious illness.
	If I have a strong feeling or premonition that something is seriously wrong with me, or with someone I love, then it's likely to be true.
	Better safe than sorry. It's always a good idea to check something out.
	You can never afford to take your health, or someone else's, for granted.
	It's always best to have an expert check your symptoms. You can never be too careful.
	You never know when disaster will strike so it's best to be ready.
	People who do not follow up by checking things out are much more likely to get sick or die.
	Researching various serious illnesses makes it more likely that you'll prevent a tragedy.
	Someone has to worry about my, or someone else's, health. It might as well be me. It is a parent's/child's/sibling's/spouse's job to worry about their loved one's health.
	Other:
	Other:
П	Other

# My Intolerance of Uncertainty Thoughts

Put a check next to the statements that you recognize as a way you think about illness. Add any thoughts or beliefs that are not listed that reflect your intolerance of uncertainty about illness and dying.

	I would rather just know that I have cancer, instead of not knowing.
	I am okay as long as I know what I am dealing with. I just cannot cope with not knowing.
	I would rather get bad news than wait any longer for my test results.
	If a test result is delayed or takes longer than I expected, that must mean it is bad news.
	I dread having to wait for my lab results, X-ray results, or for my scans to be read.
	It is easier to deal with bad news than to not know what is going on with my symptoms, or the symptoms of someone I love.
	It is unfair that there are no guarantees of good health or a long life.
	I cannot relax when things are uncertain about my health or the health of someone I love.
	I don't like surprising symptoms or changes in my body. I wish things would stay the same.
	It is unfair that people age and die.
	I just wish there was a test or scan that a doctor could do to prove to me that everything is okay.
	I dread my annual physical because I know I am going to get bad results.
	I may have been healthy thus far, but the next time I see my doctor, I know that he/she will find something that is seriously wrong.
	I get anxious when I see changes in my stool, sputum/mucus, appetite, bowel habits, complexion, or other signs of health.
П	Other:

# Chapter 3: Dealing with Fears of Illness, Dying, and Death

## Writing Your Obituary and Eulogy, and Planning Your Funeral\*

\*If your illness anxiety is about the health of someone else, then do this exercise as though it's that person's death. If you worry about both your health and someone else's, then do these exercises for each person.

Writing	Your	: Obituary	7
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Write down the obituary that would be posted in the newspaper or social media, mentioning your name, date of death (one month from now), age, cause of death, a few of your accomplishments, surviving family, and the illness-related memorial fund for
donations. Once you write it, read it aloud repeatedly until you can do so without tearing up or getting anxious.
donations. Thee you write it, read it about repeatedly until you can do so without tearing up of getting anxious.
Whiting Vary Enlage
Writing Your Eulogy
Write a speech that someone would give about the tragic loss of your life, or the life of someone you love whose health
worries you, due to your most feared illness. Mention how there was nothing that could be done and how much everyone will miss you, especially those who love you most. Mention what was significant about your life and what people will fondly remember about
you.
,

# Planning Your Funeral

preparati funeral. I	e down all of your instructions for those who survive you, for what should happen at your funeral, burial, and/or in the on of your body for burial or cremation. Be sure to cover any religious traditions or spiritual aspects that you want at your neclude the hymns, prayers, or songs that you want, the guest list, the type of casket or urn, the flowers or memorial donawould like, the type of music or specific songs, the speakers who will eulogize you, and whether or not you want people to
share spo	ontaneous memories. Describe the type of artifacts you might want at the wake, meal, or other gathering, such as photo-
_	rophies, or other mementos. Choose the food that you would like to be served to the funeral guests. Be sure to include bout the burial or scattering of your ashes.
My Ex	posure Practice Master List
Please ad	d to this list as you uncover situations, images, or thoughts that trigger your illness anxiety. Many people discover more r treatment after they get started with exposure practice.
1	
2	
3	
4	
5.	
_	
8	
9	
10.	

# Chapter 4: Giving Up Reassurance-Seeking

## Escaping the Trap of Reassurance-Seeking

So, now it's your turn to set some goals for breaking up with your reassurance-seeking. You are going to write down a list of the people, websites, news feeds, or other online domains you visit for the purpose of seeking reassurance. Next to each type of reassurance-seeking you engage in, write down your first step(s) toward breaking this particular habit.

Reassurance-Seeking	Ways to Wean Myself

# Contract to Stop Practicing Medicine on Yourself, or Those You Love

For La	rypeople:
I.	, vow to stop practicing medicine on myself, or those I love, when I am under the influence
of my illn health of	ness anxiety. I acknowledge that my illness anxiety interferes with my ability to be objective about my own health, or the those I love. I know that my illness anxiety impairs my ability to offer healthcare. I agree to leave the diagnosis and treat- ny health, or the health of someone I love, in the hands of my/their doctors, nurses, and therapists, without trying to do any
• ]	Research their opinions to make sure they are the best
• (	Seek alternative treatments that might be better
• ]	Make sure the healthcare team knows all the same research that I do
• ]	Interrogate the healthcare team to make sure they really did give me the best information
• ]	Research the healthcare team's online reviews, background, or publications to make sure that they are the best
• ]	Research every diagnosis and treatment given before being willing to try a recommended treatment
Sioned:	Date:
	edical Professionals:
of my illn health of distorts m unnecessa	, vow to stop practicing medicine on myself, or those I love, when I am under the influence ness anxiety. I acknowledge that my illness anxiety interferes with my ability to be objective about my own health, or the those I love. I know that my illness anxiety impairs my ability to offer healthcare. I understand that my illness anxiety my ability to use my medical knowledge and skills, making me ineffective and very likely to make decisions that are medically ary, expensive, and likely to make my illness and anxiety worse. I agree to leave the diagnosis and treatment of my health, alth of someone I love, in the hands of my/their doctors, nurses, and therapists, without trying to do any of the following:
• ]	Research their opinions to make sure they are the best
• (	Seek alternative treatments that might be better
• ]	Make sure the healthcare team knows all the same research that I do
• ]	Interrogate the healthcare team to make sure they really did give me the best information
• ]	Research the healthcare team's online reviews, background, or publications to make sure that they are the best
• ]	Research every diagnosis and treatment given before being willing to try a recommended treatment
Sign ad.	Date

# Exposure Practice for Reassurance-Seeking

Reassurance-seeking behavior	Ways to wean myself	Unhelpful thoughts that make it hard to give up reassurance-seeking	Anticipated anxiety level (0-10) 0=total calm 10=total panic	What actually happened and what I learned from facing my fear

# List of People to Ask to Stop Giving You Reassurance

Write down the names of people you seek out for reassurance, including your medical team. Be brave and include everyone you know that you go to for a quick fix of anxiety relief.

Name	Way you seek reassurance, e.g., texting, calling, emailing, talking in person

# Chapter 5: Tolerating Uncertainty

# Exposure to Uncertainty Practice

Uncertain situation that triggers my anxiety	Ways I will avoid getting certainty or researching ahead of time	Worst-case scenario that I fear	What actually happened and what I learned about myself because I did exposure practice

# Chapter 6: Dealing with Real Health Risks

## Things Doctors Consider an Emergency

Doctors are very clear about what constitutes a real emergency. You may want to print this out so you have a reminder of what the real crises are in your life, to stand in opposition to your anxious version of a crisis. This checklist will help remind you that, in most if not all cases, you're experiencing a false alarm.

If any of the following things happen to you, you need to call for emergency help and seek immediate medical care.

- Absence of a heartbeat
- Absence of breathing
- Difficulty breathing with signs of lack of oxygen, such as bluish skin or nailbeds
- Bones sticking out of your skin
- Loss of consciousness that is not explained by a known condition, such as low blood pressure or a dysautonomia
- Blood squirting out
- Amputation of a part of your body
- Sudden onset of paralysis, or partial paralysis
- Extreme acute pain
- Sudden choking that results in inability to talk or breathe
- Second-degree burns of the entire hand, foot, or genitals (blisters have formed)
- Third-degree burns of any type (skin is charred and tissue has been destroyed and smells burned)
- Sudden loss of ability to speak, to move, or to understand what others are saying
- Sudden severe fatigue or weakness that makes exertion impossible or extremely difficult
- Severe weakness where moving is difficult and makes you feel exhausted or out of breath
- Prolonged vomiting/diarrhea (more than three episodes), especially when it results in severe lethargy

The aforementioned symptoms require immediate care and it will be obvious to everyone that something is terribly wrong. Other symptoms may require medical attention, or even urgent care, but they are not at the same level of concern as those listed here. These symptoms require that you or others take immediate action, and they can properly be called a crisis. This guideline is similar to the ones that medical staff use to determine who gets seen immediately and who is asked to wait.

#### The New Normal

The goal of this exercise is to establish a new set of norms for your life with a chronic, serious, or terminal condition—and then to embrace these norms, in order to help manage or minimize your physical discomfort and improve your quality of life.

In the first column, list the things that you now have to do that are "normal" for anyone with your health status (e.g., regular labs, taking medications, needing treatments, or interacting frequently with the medical system).

© 2022 Karen Cassiday / New Harbinger Publications. Permission is granted to the reader to reproduce this form for personal use. In the second column, list the advantage of each of these things that are part of your typical day or life as a person with your health condition. For example, regular blood tests help your medical team adjust your medications to keep you more comfortable or in better health. Regular intravenous meds give you less pain and the ability to enjoy your work, family, and friends.

New normal health activities	Advantages of doing this

Now list what you have learned from being a person with your health status. You may have learned about the kindness of others, your ability to endure or accomplish things despite feeling unwell, or about the preciousness of every good moment. Take time to think about what the blessings are of being in your situation, perhaps around developing a refined understanding of the blessings of life, relationships, good moments, nature, your faith, God, or anything else that comes to mind.

1.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

# Chapter 8: Sample Script for Talking to Your Doctor About Your Illness Anxiety

Here is an example of how you could talk to your healthcare provider about your anxiety. You might want to practice saying this to a supportive person ahead of time if you feel anxious about talking about your anxiety to your doctor.

"I would like you to know that I struggle with anxiety about serious illness. It can make me really nervous, lose sleep, or feel miserable for days or weeks at a time [describe what happens to you when you have an episode of illness anxiety]. Sometimes my anxiety can make me seek reassurance by repeatedly questioning you, your staff, or going on the Internet to try and make sure I am not seriously ill. This can happen no matter how much I trust you or your recommendations. I just get stuck wanting to make sure I am not seriously ill.

"I am not a hypochondriac. I just get worries about illness stuck in my mind. I am working on it, to try and not accidentally give in to asking too many questions and doing too much research. It also makes me even more anxious when someone tells me to just stop worrying. I already know that! I just need your help to manage my anxiety without accidentally making you or your staff misunderstand me."

# Chapter 9: Express Gratitude to Build Joy and Resilience

## The Thirty-Day Gratitude Challenge

Select a time each day to reflect on your day and identify three things for which you are grateful. If you're a morning person, first thing in the morning might work well. Conversely if you're an evening person, recording your gratitude before bedtime might be better. Make a commitment to yourself to spend five to seven minutes each day to record three things for which you're grateful.

Day of the week	Three things for which I'm grateful
	1.
	2.
	3.
	1.
	2.
	3.
	1.
	2.
	3.
	1.
	2.
	3.
	1.
	2.
	3.
	1.
	2.
	3.
	1.
	2.
	3.

Make yourself write down three things each day, no matter how much your illness anxiety gets in the way. It's especially important to stick to your plan when you struggle, because it will help lift your mood and inspire you to persevere even when your day feels difficult. You'll discover that there's still good in the midst of anxiety.

some of the time

# Chapter 10: What About Other Treatments?

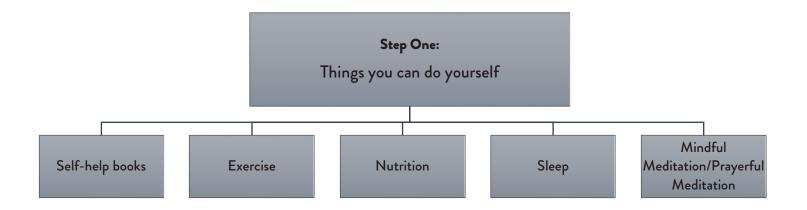
## My Recovery Record of Progress

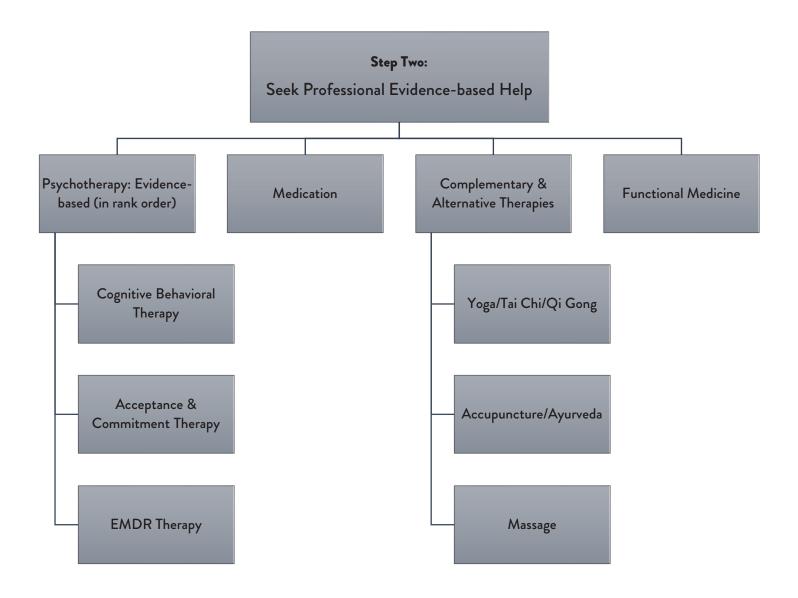
It is important that you keep your eye on meaningful progress while you are attempting your own recovery or working with a mental health or integrative health professional. To this end, it's helpful to keep track of your progress, so your treatment stays on track and your motivation high.

Here is a list of the typical steps that people make as they are recovering. Checkmark or highlight each step that you achieve. Feel free to create your own lists of symptoms that are unique to you or your situation.

	When I think about illness, I have a panic attack		I rarely feel tempted to surf the Internet for medical information
	When I think about illness, I get really anxious, but I no longer have a panic attack		I no longer feel tempted to surf the Internet for medical
	When I think about illness, I feel moderate anxiety		information
	When I think about illness, I feel less anxiety		I constantly check my body, or someone else's, for symptoms
	When I think about illness, I feel no anxiety	П	I check my body or someone else's for symptoms half of
	I can wait longer before I give in to the urge to seek		the time
	reassurance I can refrain from seeking reassurance even though I am		I check my body or someone else's for symptoms some of the time
_	super anxious		I check my body or someone else's for symptoms rarely
	I can refrain from seeking reassurance and feel moderate		I no longer check my body or someone else's for symptoms
	anxiety		I think about serious illness/dying almost all of the time
	I can refrain from seeking reassurance and feel mild anxiety		, ,
	I can refrain from seeking reassurance and feel no anxiety	Ц	I think about serious illness/dying most of the time
	I can hear about someone else's symptoms and feel super anxious but not panic		I think about serious illness/dying half of the time
			I think about serious illness/dying some of the time
	I can hear about someone else's symptoms and feel moderate anxiety		I rarely think about serious illness/dying
			I no longer think about serious illness/dying
	I can hear about someone else's symptoms and feel mild anxiety		When I do something that I used to avoid, I get panic attacks
	I can hear about someone else's symptoms and feel no anxiety		When I do something that I used to avoid, I get severe anxiety but no panic attacks
	I feel tempted to surf the Internet for medical information all of the time		When I do something that I used to avoid, I get moderate anxiety
	I feel tempted to surf the Internet for medical information half of the time		When I do something that I used to avoid, I get mild anxiety
	I feel tempted to surf the Internet for medical information		I no longer get anxious when I do things that I used to avoid

## Flowchart of Treatment Options





## Resources

## Finding Providers Who Work with Illness Anxiety

#### The Academy of Cognitive Therapy

https://www.academyofct.org

Lists therapists and psychiatrists who have special certification in providing evidence-based therapies, many of whom are trained in treating anxiety-related disorders. Listings are also international.

#### Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine

https://www.aihm.org

Lists licensed and trained medical specialists who practice holistic medicine, such as acupuncture, nutrition, and herbal medicine, along with traditional medicine. They have international listings of members.

#### Acufinder.com

Provides international listings for providers of acupuncture.

#### American Massage Therapy Association

https://www.amta.org

Lists licensed providers who maintain the highest standards of care and training in evidence-based methods of massage, reiki, cupping, and other body therapies.

#### American Society of Acupuncturists

https://www.asa.org

Lists providers who are trained in the use of acupuncture for a wide variety of conditions, including anxiety-related disorders.

#### Anxiety and Depression Association of America

https://findatherapist.adaa.org

Lists mental health professionals who are familiar with, have expertise in, and enjoy working with people who have anxiety-related disorders, such as illness anxiety. Their website also lists both telehealth and in-person providers of mental health services. Listings are also international.

#### Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies

https://www.abct.org

Lists mental health professionals who are trained in evidence-based treatments and who specialize in anxiety-related disorders, such as illness anxiety. Listings are also international.

#### International Association of Reiki Providers

https://www.iarp

Lists providers of reiki.

#### International Obsessive Compulsive Foundation

https://www.iocdf.org

Lists providers in evidence-based care who are familiar with treatment of illness anxiety. Listings are also international.

**Note:** Many holistic providers and massage therapists will know of other skilled providers in integrative and complementary therapies that might not be listed in the organizations mentioned above. Just be willing to ask.