

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a really useful emotion; it alerts us to threat or danger. It is the brain's way of keeping us safe. The brain, however, has a "better safe than sorry!" attitude. This means we are more likely to feel anxious in the absence of a threat, than to miss something dangerous together.

We often feel anxiety in a physical way. Physical symptoms of anxiety are designed to help us to fight or flee from danger; this is often known as our "fight or flight" response; for example the heart beats faster to get blood and oxygen to our muscles.

We also experience some behavioural changes and altered thinking patterns (e.g. focusing on worst-case scenarios). These are normal features of anxiety and simply a way our brain tries to protect ourselves from harm. Although it is protective, anxiety is still distressing. There are many steps we can take to manage anxiety.

Types of Anxiety

Social Anxiety
Generalised Anxiety Disorder
Panic

Obsessive Compulsive
Disorder (OCD)
Phobias

Symptoms

Excessive worry or apprehension
Muscle tension
Difficulty concentrating
Feeling restless
Rapid breathing
Re-occurring or intrusive thoughts

Increased heart rate
Worry that is difficult to control
Sleeping problems
Avoiding activities, people or places
Dry mouth
Blurred vision

How to Manage Anxiety



Breathing

1. Practise diaphragmatic breathing (sometimes known as belly breathing). As you breathe in, your belly (rather than your chest) pushes out. As you exhale, your belly contracts. This takes a bit of practice! Try 5 minutes per day.
2. Practise a longer, slow exhale for relaxation.



Worry Time

If worry feels all consuming, try to schedule in some "worry time" each day e.g. at 6pm, set a timer for 10 minutes and use the time to think about your worries. If a worry pops into your mind at another time of day, reassure yourself you will look into this at 6pm. People often find that postponing worries in this way helps worries to be more manageable and less intrusive. Learning how to let go of worries feels good.



Talk to Someone you Trust

Opening up to someone can be hard but talking to someone you trust about your anxiety can be a relief.



Self-care

Make sure you are taking care of your physical health by getting enough sleep, exercising and having a balanced diet. Self-care isn't just about 'me time' and relaxing baths, although these are important; sometimes self-care is about allocating time to pay bills, not checking your emails at night and remembering to take a lunch break.



Worry Journal

Some people find it helpful to keep a worry journal in a notebook, or on their mobile phone. That way you can put your worries to one side. Others find it helpful to keep a pen and paper by their bed to write down any worries that may come to them in the night.



Am I Avoiding?

If you are experiencing anxiety, it can be helpful to check whether you are avoiding things that make you feel anxious. E.g. avoiding certain people, places or activities. Often, anxious avoidance can make anxiety worse in the long run. A therapist can help you work through this.



Further support

If you feel like you are struggling, further support is out there:

Samaritans:
116 123

NHS:
111 or check in
with your GP

Apps:
Headspace
iOS and Android

Self-help books:
reading-well.org.uk

Talk to us at Talk Works: 0191 490 9301



“5.9 in 100 people in England experience generalised anxiety disorder.”

Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult psychiatric morbidity survey 2014. NHS digital.

“In the UK, more than 1 in 10 people are likely to have a ‘disabling anxiety disorder’ at some stage in their life.”

anxietyuk.org.uk/get-help/anxiety-information/frequently-asked-questions

Improving employee wellbeing through talking therapies & training



We'd love to hear from you

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