

Youth

RESOURCE PACKS

Anxiety Toolkit

A WELLBEING GUIDE TO HELP WITH
YOUR ANXIETY



Response



Response

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a mental and physical reaction to perceived threats. In small doses, anxiety is helpful as it protects us from danger, and focuses our attention on problems. But when anxiety is too severe, or happens too often, it can impact you negatively.

SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

- Uncontrollable worry
- Excessive nervousness
- Sleep problems
- Muscle tension
- Poor concentration
- Increased Heart rate
- Upset stomach
- Avoidance of fear

TYPES OF ANXIETY

Generalised anxiety: An excessive amount of anxiety or worry in several areas of life, such as job responsibilities, health, finances or minor concerns.

Phobias: A very intense fear of a specific situation or object, which is out of proportion to its actual threat. For example, a fear of giving speeches or of spiders could be considered a phobia.

Panic: An extreme anxious response where a person experiences a panic attack. The person is overwhelmed by a feeling of dread.

TYPES OF ANXIETY



Anxiety drives people to avoid the thing that scare them. When a 'scary' thing is avoided, there is an immediate but short-lived sense of relief. However, the next time a similar threat arises, it feels even scarier. This creates a harmful cycle of avoidance, and worsening anxiety.

CAUSES OF ANXIETY

Anxiety is not always related to an underlying condition.

COMMON CAUSES

- Stress that can result from work, school, personal relationship
- Emotional trauma
- Financial concerns
- Stress caused by a chronic or serious medical condition
- A major event or performance
- Side effect of certain medications
- Alcohol consumption, drugs such as cocaine
- Lack of oxygen



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HOW TO FEEL BETTER

1. Deep Breathing Exercises

Practice deep breathing exercises to activate the body's relaxation response. Try the box-breathing technique below.

Breathe in through your nose as you slowly count to four in your head. Be conscious of how the air fills your lungs and stomach. Hold your breath for a count of four. Exhale for another count of four. Hold your breath again for a count of four.

Watch a video on box breathing!



2. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

PMR is an exercise that reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle. The theory behind this exercise is that you cannot have the feeling of relaxation and warm well-being in your body and at the same time experience anxiety symptoms.

There are many great apps you can use on your phone. Headspace and insight Timer are two fantastic guided PMR apps you can use.



Watch a video on progressive muscle relaxation

Thought Awareness

Thought awareness is a practice that involves consciously observing and acknowledging your thoughts without judgment or attachment. It is often used as a mindfulness technique to increase self-awareness and develop a more balanced and objective perspective on one's thoughts.

- 1 Find a quiet and comfortable place where you can sit or lie down without distractions.
- 2 Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to centre yourself and relax your body.
- 3 Begin to observe your thoughts without actively engaging with them. Imagine yourself as an impartial observer, watching the thoughts pass by like clouds in the sky.
- 4 Notice the different types of thoughts that arise, whether they are positive or negative, judgments or observations, worries or plans. Try to maintain a non-judgmental attitude toward your thoughts.
- 5 If you find yourself getting caught up in a particular thought or getting carried away by a stream of thoughts, gently redirect your attention back to the act of observing without getting entangled in the content of the thoughts.
- 6 As you continue to observe your thoughts, also pay attention to any emotions or physical sensations that arise in response to those thoughts. Again, maintain a non-judgmental attitude and simply observe them without getting attached.
- 7 Practice this thought awareness for a few minutes to start with, gradually increasing the duration as you become more comfortable with the process.

REMEMBER, THE GOAL OF THOUGHT AWARENESS IS NOT TO SUPPRESS OR CONTROL YOUR THOUGHTS BUT TO DEVELOP A GREATER SENSE OF SELF-AWARENESS AND CULTIVATE A MORE MINDFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR THINKING PATTERNS

Self Care

- 1 Take a warm bath or shower: Allow yourself to relax and unwind by indulging in a soothing bath or shower. You can add essential oils, bath salts, or your favourite scented products for an extra touch of luxury.
- 2 Get quality sleep: Ensure you are getting enough sleep each night. Create a relaxing bedtime routine, keep your sleeping environment comfortable, and avoid electronic devices before bed.
- 3 Read a book: Escape into another world or learn something new by immersing yourself in a good book. Choose a genre that interests you and allow yourself to get lost in the pages.
- 4 Try journaling: Writing down your thoughts, feelings, and experiences can be therapeutic. You can use a journal to express yourself, reflect on your day, set goals, or explore your creativity.
- 5 Connect with nature: Spend time outdoors, whether it's taking a walk in the park, sitting by the beach, or hiking in the mountains. Nature has a calming effect and can help reduce stress.
- 6 Practice self-compassion: Be kind and gentle with yourself. Treat yourself with the same care and understanding you would give to a friend. Practice positive self-talk and celebrate your achievements, no matter how small.
- 7 Engage in a creative activity: Find a creative outlet that brings you joy, such as painting, playing a musical instrument, knitting, or cooking. Engaging in creative activities can be therapeutic and allow you to express yourself.
- 8 Listen to music: Create a playlist of your favorite songs or explore new genres. Music has the power to uplift your mood and evoke emotions.
- 9 Incorporate small acts of self-care into your daily life, such as taking breaks, nourishing your body with healthy meals, staying hydrated, and prioritizing activities that bring you joy.
- 10 Exercise releases a low dose jolt of chemicals to the brain's reward centres. 'The don't worry be happy feeling' locks onto your receptors in your brain, making you feel good.

Limit Stressors

Identify triggers that contribute to your anxiety and find ways to minimize or avoid them. This may include reducing exposure to certain environments, people, or activities.

Self-reflection and awareness: Take the time to reflect on your own experiences and pay attention to situations or events that consistently lead to feelings of anxiety. This could include specific places, people, activities, or thoughts. Keep a journal to track your feelings and any patterns you notice.

Pay attention to physical and emotional changes: Notice any changes in your body or emotions when you start to feel anxious. These changes may include increased heart rate, shallow breathing, sweating, restlessness, irritability, or a sense of impending doom. Understanding how your body reacts to anxiety can provide insights into what triggers it.

Take note of common anxiety triggers: While triggers can vary from person to person, certain situations tend to provoke anxiety in many individuals. These can include public speaking, social situations, financial stress, work deadlines, exams, or major life changes. Be aware of these common triggers and assess whether any of them resonate with your own experiences.

Analyze past anxious episodes: Reflect on past instances of anxiety and try to identify commonalities. Look for patterns in the situations, people, or circumstances that were present during those episodes. This retrospective analysis can help you uncover potential triggers.

Who can help...



In an emergency

Call 999 if you are in immediate danger and unable to keep yourself safe

My GP

They can offer advice, prescribe medication and refer you to other relevant services

Someone I trust

Parents, teacher, my manager, colleague, friend or partner

Dial 111

If you are not at immediate risk and the GP is closed

Text Shout

Text 85258 for free, confidential, mental health support, 24/7

Call Samaritans

Call 116 123 for support on the phone 24/7, 365 days a year

Contact Mind

www.mind.org.uk for information, advice and local services

**Search
hubofhope.co.uk**

They provide information on local support services

Look up Young Minds

They ensure young people receive the support they need

Together we can achieve change