

Mental Health Awareness 2023

Anxiety



What is anxiety?

It's normal to feel anxious sometimes. It's how we respond to feeling threatened, under pressure or stressed: for example, if we have an exam, job interview or doctor's appointment.

Anxiety isn't necessarily a bad thing. It can spur us on, help us stay alert, make us aware of risks and motivate us to solve problems.

However, anxiety can be a problem if it affects your ability to live your life. If your anxiety is ongoing, intense, hard to control or out of proportion to your situation, it can be a sign of a mental health problem.

15 to 21 May 2023



Mental Health Awareness Week

 Mental Health Foundation

#ToHelpMyAnxiety

Anxiety can have both physical and mental symptoms.

The effect on your mind can include:

A feeling of dread or fearing the worst, feeling on edge or panicky, difficulty concentrating, irritability, feeling detached from yourself or the world around you;

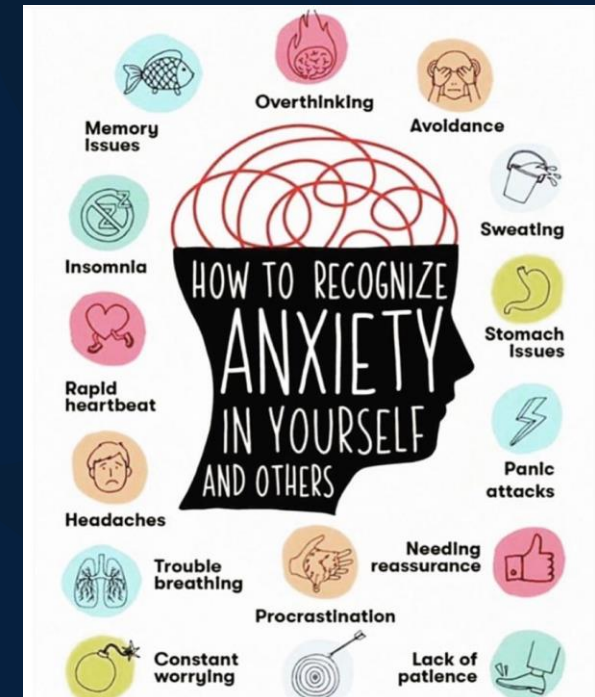
Physical feelings can include:

Restlessness, feeling dizzy or light-headed, wobbly legs or pins and needles in your hands and feet, shortness of breath or hyperventilating, heart palpitations (a noticeably strong, fast heartbeat), nausea (feeling sick), needing the toilet more or less often, sweating, sleep problems, panic attacks;

Anxiety can also affect your behaviour. You may withdraw from friends and family, feel unable to go to work, or avoid certain places. While avoiding situations can give you short-term relief, the anxiety often returns the next time you're in the situation.

Avoiding it only reinforces the feeling of danger and never gives you a chance to find out whether your fears are true or not.

Some people with anxiety may appear to be fine on the outside while still having some of the symptoms listed above. You may have developed ways of hiding your anxiety so that other people don't notice it.



Coping with Anxiety

- 1. Focus on your breathing** When you're having anxious thoughts try focusing on your breathing, concentrating on the feeling of your body as you breathe in and out. It can help you control the thought.
4-7-8 breathing technique Close your mouth and quietly breath in through your nose, counting to four in your head. Hold your breath and count to seven. Breathe out through your mouth, making a whoosh sound while counting to eight. Repeat three more times for a total of four breath cycles
- 2. Get moving** Exercise is a good way of dealing with anxiety. Remember, activity doesn't have to be vigorous; try some gentle stretches, yoga, or seated exercises. Or just go for a walk. Going for a run, swimming, or taking part in a fitness class can give you something else to think about. It needs a bit of concentration, so takes your mind of the anxious thoughts. Any amount of exercise will help.
- 3. Keep a diary** It's important that we don't try to ignore our worries. Taking the time to keep a record of what's happening in your life and how it's affecting you can help you understand what is triggering your feelings of anxiety. Knowing this can help you better prepare for and manage situations that may cause anxiety. Sometimes it helps to give yourself a certain time of day to be your 'worry time'. It could be half an hour first thing in the morning for to sit with your worries and write them down in your diary. When that's out of the way, you can move on with the rest of your day. This can help you take control and stop anxiety getting in the way of what you want to do.

4. Challenge your thoughts Anxiety can lead us to think about things over and over again in our brain. This is called 'rumination' and it's not helpful. When you catch yourself ruminating try to write down the thought and to challenge it. Is what you're worrying about likely to happen? Are you being realistic? Have you had similar thoughts which have not turned into reality? This can make it easier to challenge the thoughts and stop them from overwhelming you

5. Spend time in nature We know that spending time in nature has a positive impact on our mental health. It can help us feel calmer and less stressed. This can be as simple as tending some flowers in a window box or going for a walk in the woods.

6. Connect with people and talk about how you feel Anxiety can feel very lonely. Connecting with other people can help a lot. Spend time with friends or meet other people through activities such as volunteering, sport or social clubs, or peer support groups. If you're able to talk to people about how you feel it can help to reduce your anxiety. Sometimes saying what's worrying you out loud can take away its power over you



Coping with Anxiety

7. Try to get some quality sleep or rest Resting and having a good night's sleep is hard when your head is full of worries but there are some things that can help. If anxious thoughts keep you awake, write them down in your diary. If sleep is still not coming, get up and have a drink (nothing with caffeine!) and wait until you're feeling more tired before going back to bed. Keeping a note in your diary of your sleep patterns, what time you went to bed, what you ate, how often you woke up etc can help you work out a routine that will help you get better quality sleep

8. Try to eat a healthy diet For many of us, feeling anxious might cause us to reach for sugary snacks, junk food or alcohol. It's important that we don't turn to unhealthy foods or drinks as a way to cope as they will do more damage in the longer term. (Similarly, we should avoid smoking or taking recreational drugs.) Eating healthy food regularly helps us to regulate our blood sugar and gives us the energy we need to live well. Remember caffeine in coffee, tea and fizzy drinks can affect your mood and cause sleep problems so it's best to have these in moderation and not too close to bedtime

If your feelings of anxiety are not going away, are having a negative impact on your life, or often prevent you from doing things you need or want to do, seek support.

Speak to your GP about support available, and some useful links below:

Mindfulness www.mentalhealth.org.uk/mindful

Exercise www.mentalhealth.org.uk/physical-activity

Cost of Living www.mentalhealth.org.uk/cost-of-living-support

Nature www.mentalhealth.org.uk/nature

Diet www.mentalhealth.org.uk/diet

Helpline services www.mentalhealth.org.uk/get-help

