

# Self-Care and Anxiety Information Pack



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# Anxiety

## What is Anxiety?

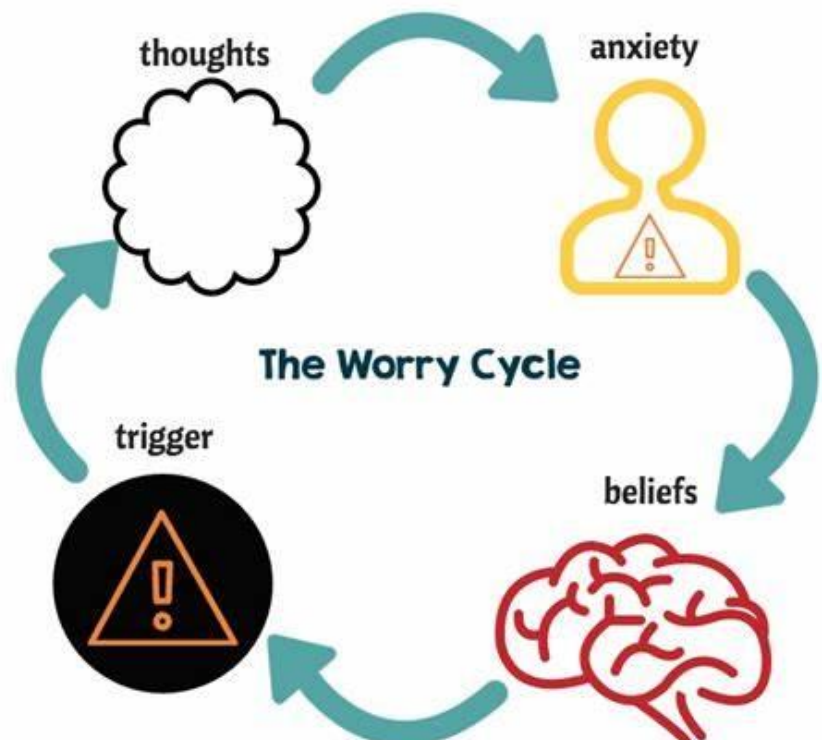
Anxiety is a very normal emotion to experience, however it is how we manage this to ensure it doesn't affect our quality of life. It is important to know it is very helpful to have some levels of anxiety as this shows that we care and it can also keep us safe in risk situations.

At this time it is normal to have levels of anxiety; however there are a few things we can do to help ourselves and others. Anxiety can become a vicious cycle which can be difficult to control, but by identifying the trigger to your anxiety, your thoughts at the time, what emotions are you experiencing and then how does this change your behaviour. By identifying this it can help you to take control of the anxiety itself so that it feels less overwhelming.

**Activity: Have a go, by writing these sections on a separate piece of paper. Identify your trigger, thoughts, emotions and behaviours.**

Anxiety can affect us in four different ways:

1. The way we feel
2. The way we think
3. The way our body works
4. The way we behave



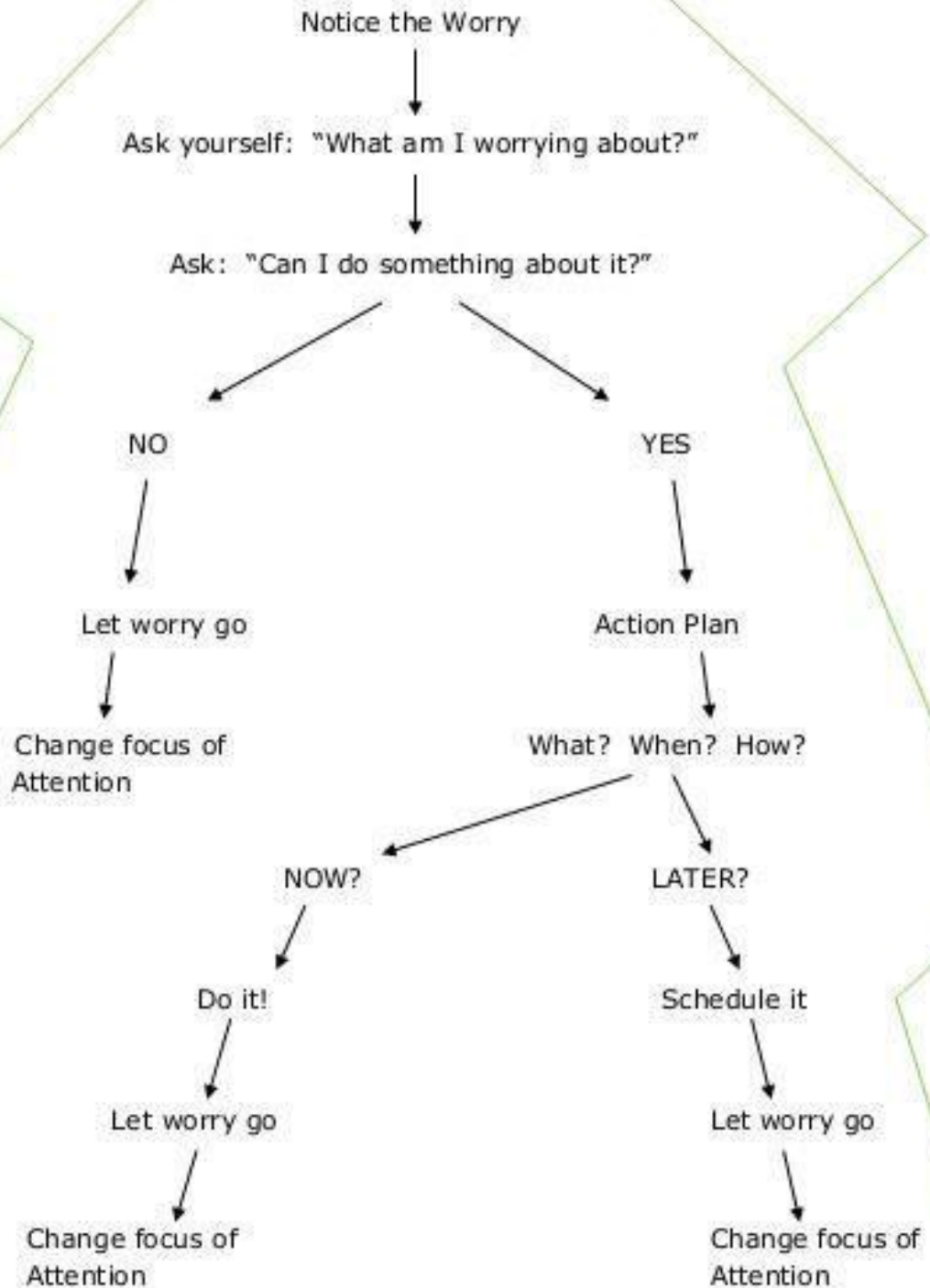
# Anxiety Techniques

- 1. Positive Journal Writing:** A positive journal can be really good techniques to help reduce the overwhelming feeling that anxiety can bring. By putting your worries and emotions on paper it can help us with sleeping and to feel in control of the worries. With a positive journal you can do this as regularly as you like, but make sure it doesn't become a chore! Write down how you are feeling, but to balance out the thought process, by ensuring that you identify 2-3 positives that you have experienced in the day for example I enjoyed my coffee today, I had a good conversation with a friend or I enjoyed my bath today.
- 2. Anxiety Diary:** Writing an anxiety diary can help to identify triggers and patterns of your behaviour which may be helpful if your behaviour/ actions have become negative and it can help to change that behaviour. For example if you lack motivation but unsure as to why this may support this. See Anxiety diary attached at end of the pack.
- 3. Worry Jar:** A worry Jar can be very useful. All you need is either a Jar or a box with a lid on it. Write your worries on a scrap piece of paper and put them inside the worry jar. As you put the worry inside the jar say to yourself or out loud "I am going to put this worry in the worry jar, as right now I don't need to worry about it, it's about letting it go." You can adapt this some people put it on their phone; adapt it to how it fits with your routine.

**4. Postponing your worry:** Set a convenient time for yourself each day which can be “worry time” where you allow yourself 20-30 minutes to problem solve any worries that can reduce your anxiety. For example, “I’m worried about getting my prescription”, to prevent the anxiety you could ring the GP or the pharmacy to put your mind at rest. When you find yourself worrying throughout the day remind yourself that you have a specific time in the day to worry. You can make a note of the worry to come back to in the worry time. Once you have said this you can focus your mind back to the here and now.

The worry tree allows you to think how to begin to manage worries see the tree on the next page:

## THE WORRY TREE



# Tips to reduce Anxiety

Here are a few tips where we can change our day to day behaviour to help reduce anxiety:

- Sleep is important for our mental health, recommend between 6-8 hours' sleep
- Reduce caffeine intake, NHS recommends 2-3 cups of caffeine a day. Look at changing to decaf where possible and try not to drink caffeine past 3pm.
- Ensure you take some time for yourself! Often we do a lot of task that we have to do, but often forget to do the things we enjoy. For example, bubble baths, painting our nails or taking 10 minutes to read a magazine. See on next page for self-care ideas.
- Eating a balanced diet, ensuring we are eating three regular meals a day.
- **It is important to identify if we are having a bad day or anxiety has become worse that it is important to be kind to yourself on that day. Ensure you do something that you enjoy even if it's watching your favourite program on Netflix.**
- Utilise breathing techniques; see the coping skills sheet attached to the self-care package.
- Physical Exercise, as we all know exercise is a positive for our mental health. Even if this is a 10 minute walk outside around the garden. Finding an exercise program on YouTube or the internet and doing this exercise in your living room.
- **The most important thing of all is that you are not alone and talking about how you are feeling can help!**

**In the current time with the Coronavirus, I would recommend that you reduce the amount of time you watch the news. It is good to keep updated and possibly select one evening news channel to watch for 30 minutes to help reduce your anxiety.**

# Relaxation

**For all of these techniques please refer to the coping skills sheet at the back of the pack.**

With relaxation currently it is not natural for your brain to undertake these and therefore it requires practice for your brain to automatically use these techniques when you're feeling anxious. Therefore it can be frustrating at times. Practice 2 minutes a day. It is also trial and error you have to find techniques that works for you and your routine, but most of all you enjoy using it!

1. **Deep Breathing:** Deep breathing can be very useful to help reduce anxiety and panic attacks. The important part of deep breathing is ensuring you sure your full diaphragm when breathing as this reduces the anxiety quicker.
2. **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** This tool is very useful when wanting to relax all your body muscles, often when we are anxious are muscles can be tense and as a result can cause pain. This exercise works through the muscle groups enabling you to relax these. Can be very nice before bed! It is more helpful to go on the following website as they have a relaxation video and someone can say the script for you.  
<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-video/progressive-muscle-relaxation>
3. Listen to relaxation music, you can often find these on YouTube.
4. Take a bubble bath with music and candles
5. There are lots of free Apps on your mobile phone that are very useful for anxiety. Including the Calm App and Headspace.



# Self-Care Ideas

Self-care is important doing things we enjoy can help to reduce anxiety but also increase self-confidence. Here are a few ideas of self-care ideas and activities that you can do at home:

- Bubble Baths
- Watching Movies
- Watching favourite series or TV program
- Painting Nails
- Face Masks
- Listening to music
- Reading a magazine/ Book
- Gardening
- Enjoy a cup of tea/coffee in the garden
- Doing a quiz night with the family at home
- Writing a positive journal
- Baking
- Make fresh soup or bread
- Organising areas within the home
- Exercising- Yoga at home, walking etc.
- Having a picnic in the garden (once weather is warmer)
- Singing around the house
- Learning a language online
- Arts and Crafts
- Mindfulness colouring books
- Puzzles
- Games Night at home
- Writing poems or stories
- Call a friend or family member
- Try a new recipe whilst cooking
- Scrap booking

# Sleep

Sleep is very important, as it gives us the motivation to undertake day to day tasks but it also allows us to function on a daily basis. Sleep hygiene' is the term used to describe good sleep habits. And this is vital to help with ensuring we have a good sleep pattern. Please see the sleep hygiene information sheet at the back of the pack.

Here are a few tips below:

- Avoid caffeine and nicotine intake at least 4-6 hours before bed
- Avoid Alcohol
- Keep the bed for sleeping only. Try not to watch TV in bed where possible.
- No naps
- Have a sleep routine but relaxing a few hours before bedtime.
- Try not to clock watch



# Resources and Links

## Apps downloading from Phones:

- Calm App- Anxiety
- Headspace- Supports sleep
- The Mindfulness App
- Breethe App
- Mood Path for depression and Anxiety
- Mind Shift CBT

## Websites:

- Therapist Aid: <https://www.therapistaid.com/>
- YouTube is helpful for relaxation music:  
<https://www.youtube.com/?gl=GB&hl=en-GB>
- Anxiety UK: <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>
- Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- Young Minds for adolescents: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/anxiety/>

## Services that can support you:

- NHS NHFT IAPT Service is a psychological services that treats low to moderate anxiety and depression, you can self-refer on the following website or call the on 0300 999 1616. <https://www.nhft.nhs.uk/iapt>
- Mind offer local support group where these are free and often they do workshops for anxiety. Please see details on following website:  
<http://www.wellingboroughmind.org.uk/services/>



# Coping Skills

## Anxiety

### Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple technique that's excellent for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it's also discreet and easy to use at any time or place.

Sit comfortably and place one hand on your abdomen. Breathe in through your nose, deeply enough that the hand on your abdomen rises. Hold the air in your lungs, and then exhale slowly through your mouth, with your lips puckered as if you are blowing through a straw. The secret is to go slow: Time the inhalation (4s), pause (4s), and exhalation (6s). Practice for 3 to 5 minutes.



### Progressive Muscle Relaxation

By tensing and relaxing the muscles throughout your body, you can achieve a powerful feeling of relaxation. Additionally, progressive muscle relaxation will help you spot anxiety by teaching you to recognize feelings of muscle tension.

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. For each area of the body listed below, you will tense your muscles tightly, but not to the point of strain. Hold the tension for 10 seconds, and pay close attention to how it feels. Then, release the tension, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs from the feeling of tension.

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Feet</b>      | Curl your toes tightly into your feet, then release them.                    |
| <b>Calves</b>    | Point or flex your feet, then let them relax.                                |
| <b>Thighs</b>    | Squeeze your thighs together tightly, then let them relax.                   |
| <b>Torso</b>     | Suck in your abdomen, then release the tension and let it fall.              |
| <b>Back</b>      | Squeeze your shoulder blades together, then release them.                    |
| <b>Shoulders</b> | Lift and squeeze your shoulders toward your ears, then let them drop.        |
| <b>Arms</b>      | Make fists and squeeze them toward your shoulders, then let them drop.       |
| <b>Hands</b>     | Make a fist by curling your fingers into your palm, then relax your fingers. |
| <b>Face</b>      | Scrunch your facial features to the center of your face, then relax.         |
| <b>Full Body</b> | Squeeze all muscles together, then release all tension.                      |

# Coping Skills

## Anxiety

### Challenging Irrational Thoughts

Anxiety can be magnified by irrational thoughts. For example, the thoughts that "something bad will happen" or "I will make a mistake" might lack evidence, but still have an impact on how you feel. By examining the evidence and challenging these thoughts, you can reduce anxiety.

**Put thoughts on trial.** Choose a thought that has contributed to your anxiety. Gather evidence in support of your thought (*verifiable facts only*), and against your thought. Compare the evidence and determine whether your thought is accurate or not.

**Use Socratic questioning.** Question the thoughts that contribute to your anxiety. Ask yourself:

"Is my thought based on facts or feelings?"  
"How would my best friend see this situation?"  
"How likely is it that my fear will come true?"  
"What's most likely to happen?"  
"If my fear comes true, will it still matter in a week? A month? A year?"

### Imagery

Your thoughts have the power to change how you feel. If you think of something sad, it's likely you'll start to feel sad. The opposite is also true: When you think of something positive and calming, you feel relaxed. The imagery technique harnesses this power to reduce anxiety.

Think of a place that you find comforting. It could be a secluded beach, your bedroom, a quiet mountaintop, or even a loud concert. For 5 to 10 minutes, use all your senses to imagine this setting in great detail. Don't just think fleetingly about this place—really imagine it.



What do you see around you? What do you notice in the distance? Look all around to take in all your surroundings. Look for small details you would usually miss.



What sounds can you hear? Are they soft or loud? Listen closely to everything around you. Keep listening to see if you notice any distant sounds.



Are you eating or drinking something enjoyable? What is the flavor like? How does it taste? Savor all the tastes of the food or drink.



What can you feel? What is the temperature like? Think of how the air feels on your skin, and how your clothes feel on your body. Soak in all these sensations.



What scents are present? Are they strong or faint? What does the air smell like? Take some time to appreciate the scents.



# sleep hygiene

## What is Sleep Hygiene?



'Sleep hygiene' is the term used to describe good sleep habits. Considerable research has gone into developing a set of guidelines and tips which are designed to enhance good sleeping, and there is much evidence to suggest that these strategies can provide long-term solutions to sleep difficulties.

There are many medications which are used to treat insomnia, but these tend to be only effective in the short-term. Ongoing use of sleeping pills may lead to dependence and interfere with developing good sleep habits independent of medication, thereby prolonging sleep difficulties. Talk to your health professional about what is right for you, but we recommend good sleep hygiene as an important part of treating insomnia, either with other strategies such as medication or cognitive therapy or alone.]

## Sleep Hygiene Tips

- 1) **Get regular.** One of the best ways to train your body to sleep well is to go to bed and get up at more or less the same time every day, even on weekends and days off! This regular rhythm will make you feel better and will give your body something to work from.
- 2) **Sleep when sleepy.** Only try to sleep when you actually feel tired or sleepy, rather than spending too much time awake in bed.
- 3) **Get up & try again.** If you haven't been able to get to sleep after about 20 minutes or more, get up and do something calming or boring until you feel sleepy, then return to bed and try again. Sit quietly on the couch with the lights off (bright light will tell your brain that it is time to wake up), or read something boring like the phone book. Avoid doing anything that is too stimulating or interesting, as this will wake you up even more.
- 4) **Avoid caffeine & nicotine.** It is best to avoid consuming any caffeine (in coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate, and some medications) or nicotine (cigarettes) for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. These substances act as stimulants and interfere with the ability to fall asleep.
- 5) **Avoid alcohol.** It is also best to avoid alcohol for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. Many people believe that alcohol is relaxing and helps them to get to sleep at first, but it actually interrupts the quality of sleep.
- 6) **Bed is for sleeping.** Try not to use your bed for anything other than sleeping and sex, so that your body comes to associate bed with sleep. If you use bed as a place to watch TV, eat, read, work on your laptop, pay bills, and other things, your body will not learn this connection.



- 7) **No naps.** It is best to avoid taking naps during the day, to make sure that you are tired at bedtime. If you can't make it through the day without a nap, make sure it is for less than an hour and before 3pm.
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- 8) **Sleep rituals.** You can develop your own rituals of things to remind your body that it is time to sleep - some people find it useful to do relaxing stretches or breathing exercises for 15 minutes before bed each night, or sit calmly with a cup of caffeine-free tea.
  - 9) **Bathtime.** Having a hot bath 1-2 hours before bedtime can be useful, as it will raise your body temperature, causing you to feel sleepy as your body temperature drops again. Research shows that sleepiness is associated with a drop in body temperature.
  - 10) **No clock-watching.** Many people who struggle with sleep tend to watch the clock too much. Frequently checking the clock during the night can wake you up (especially if you turn on the light to read the time) and reinforces negative thoughts such as "Oh no, look how late it is, I'll never get to sleep" or "it's so early, I have only slept for 5 hours, this is terrible."
  - 11) **Use a sleep diary.** This worksheet can be a useful way of making sure you have the right facts about your sleep, rather than making assumptions. Because a diary involves watching the clock (see point 10) it is a good idea to only use it for two weeks to get an idea of what is going and then perhaps two months down the track to see how you are progressing.
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- 12) **Exercise.** Regular exercise is a good idea to help with good sleep, but try not to do strenuous exercise in the 4 hours before bedtime. Morning walks are a great way to start the day feeling refreshed!
  - 13) **Eat right.** A healthy, balanced diet will help you to sleep well, but timing is important. Some people find that a very empty stomach at bedtime is distracting, so it can be useful to have a light snack, but a heavy meal soon before bed can also interrupt sleep. Some people recommend a warm glass of milk, which contains tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep inducer.
  - 14) **The right space.** It is very important that your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable for sleeping. A cooler room with enough blankets to stay warm is best, and make sure you have curtains or an eyemask to block out early morning light and earplugs if there is noise outside your room.
  - 15) **Keep daytime routine the same.** Even if you have a bad night sleep and are tired it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned. That is, don't avoid activities because you feel tired. This can reinforce the insomnia.