



# Anxiety



**Latimer Well being**

## Symptoms of anxiety:

### Feelings

On edge

Nervous

Panicky

Stressed

Irritable / low patience  
threshold

Uptight

### Physical symptoms

Tense body

Muscular pain

Dizzy

Faint

Tight / painful chest

Stomach churning

Heart racing / palpitations

Fast breathing or slower  
than usual

Difficulty concentrating

### Thinking styles

Focusing on 'what if' something bad happens

Mind jumps from one worry to another

Imagining the worst case scenarios

Feelings of alertness—always being on the look out for danger

### Behaviour patterns

Avoiding doing things you'd like to do due to excessive worry

Pacing, fidgeting, restlessness

Short tempered, snapping

Becoming easily flustered

Talking quickly

## Causes of anxiety:

### Life events:

Stressful life events can lead to anxiety.

This is especially true once you experience numerous pressures at the same time.

This is a result of feeling that we/ they cannot cope with the demands placed upon us/them.

Others can learn to become anxious: if an experience has previously caused anxiety, the next time they're exposed to a similar situation, they

### Thinking styles:

Anxious individuals tend to have a thinking pattern expecting that the worst possible scenario will occur.

They are in a 'fight or flight' mode, awaiting something bad to happen.

By thinking about all the possible negative outcomes they are preparing themselves for what could go wrong. However, this leads to negative

### Evolutionary reasons:

Anxiety once was a benefit to our survival: fight or flight. However, this response is outdated in most cases.

Anxiety as a positive response: Anxiety causes a state of readiness in the body: pumping heart, more blood delivered to muscles, sweating to regulate body temperature, heavy breathing to supply more oxygen to our muscles. Our body is ready for action. Yet this response is only beneficial in some situations, such as sports day or fighting off a bear!

### Biological reasons:

Anxiety can be biological.

If an immediate family members is of an anxious disposition, there is an increased chance of inheriting this same disposition.



## How to reduce anxiety: Challenging unhelpful thoughts

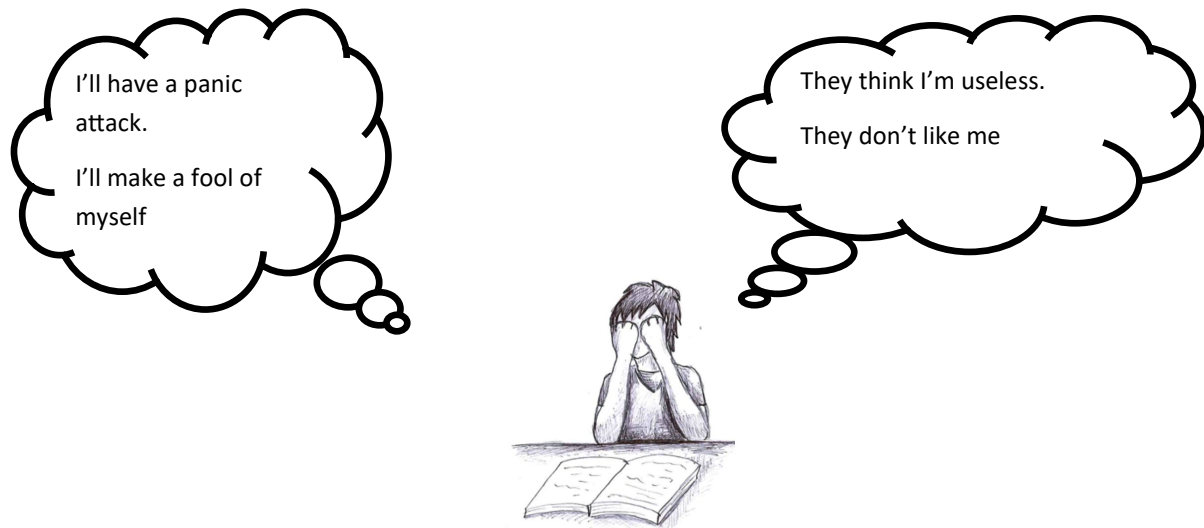
### Challenging unhelpful thoughts:

Thoughts and anxiety are directly related. Many thoughts are born from our subconscious, they can often be negative or unhelpful. It's vital to label them as thoughts, not feelings. A thought doesn't equate truth.

All unhelpful thoughts should be questioned and challenged—often the thoughts are wrong!

By recognising more realistic possibilities, it can help to reduce anxiety and create healthier thought paths.


### Examples of negative and anxious thoughts:



It's important to be able to recognise unhelpful thoughts. Then you can challenge it. Being aware of the common patterns that unhelpful thoughts follow help when recognising when they occur.

## Examples of unhelpful thought patterns:

<b>Predicting the future</b>	Predicting what could go wrong, rather than just letting things be.
<b>Mind reading</b>	Assuming how others feel without having any real evidence
<b>Catastrophising</b>	Blowing things out of proportion: assuming things are far worse than they actually are/ thinking terrible things will happen in the future without any evidence
<b>Focusing on the negatives</b>	By focusing on the negatives, this fuels anxiety
<b>Should statements</b>	Focusing on how things 'should be' or they would like them to be, not how they really are
<b>Over generalising</b>	Basing all thoughts on one isolated incident and labelling all future experiences as the same
<b>What If statements</b>	What if ... happens? This type of thinking leads to avoidance
<b>Labelling</b>	Attaching negative labels: I'm weak, I can't cope, I'm a waste of space.



**SELF HELP: Challenging  
unhelpful thoughts**

## Challenging unhelpful thought patterns:

Ask yourself.....

Is there any evidence that contradicts the thoughts?

Can you identify any of the unhelpful thought patterns?

What would you say to friend who had this thought in a similar situation?

What are the costs and benefits of thinking this way?

How will you feel about this in 6 months time?

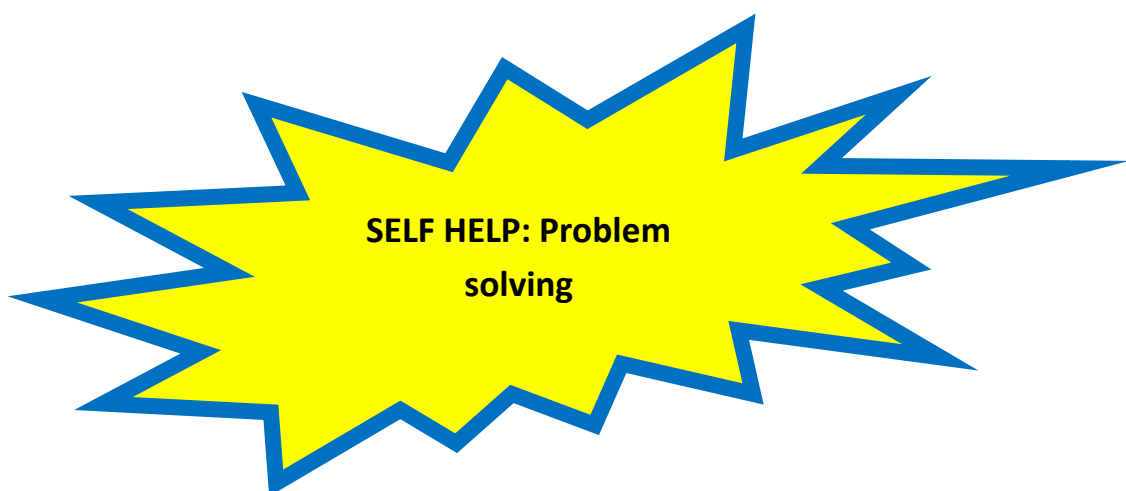
Is there another way of looking at the situation?



**SELF HELP: Thought diary**

## How to reduce anxiety: Limiting the time spent worrying

<b>Identify the problem</b>	Specifically identify the source of worry
<b>Come up with possible solutions</b>	List all the ways the problem can be solved—even if they are unrealistic. Think: how would you have previously solves it? How would you advise a friend to solve it?
<b>Choose a solution</b>	Go through the list, considering the pros and cons. Which is best?  Remember: not all problems can be controlled
<b>Break down the solution</b>	Create small steps to help achieve the solution,
<b>Try the solution and review the outcome</b>	Pace is key. Keep it at a comfortable pace, don't rush. If the problem is solved—brilliant! If not,



## How to reduce anxiety: Limiting the time spent worrying

### Worry time

Assign worry time: allow 15-20 minutes in each day to worry. If a worry occurs outside of this time, write it down and then pick it up in 'worry time'. This technique gives an element of control—showing that you decide when to worry or not. Another benefit, is that once you do reconsider the 'worry', it may have been resolved or not seem worthy of worry anymore.

1. Decide a time in the day that you will have your 'worry time'.
  2. At other times, simply note down any worries that pop into your head and try to forget about them.
  3. Once your 'worry time' arrives, choose how long you will allow yourself to 'worry' (try to keep it no longer than 15-20 minutes). Begin timing yourself so your 'worry time' doesn't overrun.
  4. During worry time, try to resolve your worries proactively. Simply try to come up with solutions to your worries if possible. Using a pen and pad to jot down solutions can be helpful.
- Stop as soon as your 'worry time' is finished. If any worries still feel unresolved, simply carry them over to tomorrow's 'worry time'.

### ⇒ **Tips for teachers and participants:**

1. If you/ they find it difficult to switch off from all of your worries during the day, don't fret, as this should improve with time and practice.
2. **It may be useful to use the SELF HELP: PROBLEM SOLVING alongside 'worry time'.**
3. When it comes to 'worry time', feel free to cut it short if you have resolved all of your worries early.
4. Often things that have worried us at one point in the day seem less problematic when we re-visit them during 'worry time'. If this happens—great—simply forget about them.

**Remember, it is usually not possible to resolve every single worry or problem that occurs. If something is outside your control (or has already happened), try not to worry as you have done all you can. There is also the possibility that the worry won't even come true in the first place.**




## How to reduce anxiety: Relaxation

Relaxation is key to stop worrying. It gives the mind a rest and you can focus on a positive activity. Here are some suggestions for relaxing activities:

- Do some exercise (e.g. swim, cycle)
- Read a book
- Watch your favourite TV show
- Go to the cinema
- Do something creative (e.g. draw, paint)
- Visit a friend or family member
- Have a bath
- **Controlled breathing**

**Have you heard of the Headspace app? This is full of meditations of varying lengths and purposes. It's a great way to grab some 'Head space' .**



**SELF HELP: Controlling  
breathing**

## Self help: Challenging unhelpful thoughts

Unhelpful Thought	Category
e.g. "My boss thinks I'm useless" "My anxiety means I'm weak"	Mind Reading Labelling

# Self help: Thought diary

Situation	Emotions—how does it make you feel?	Unhelpful thought(s)	Challenges to unhelpful thought(s) <i>Use the questions below to help</i>  Is there any evidence that contradicts the thoughts?  Can you identify any of the unhelpful thought patterns?  What would you say to friend who had this thought in a similar situation?  What are the costs and benefits of thinking this way?  How will you feel about this in 6 months time?  Is there another way of looking at the situation?	Balanced thought(s) <i>Can you think of a balanced thought that would be more accurate?</i>

# Self help: Problem solving

Identify Your Problem
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Possible Solutions
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For	Against
-----	---------



Chosen Solution
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Steps Required
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

# Self help: Controlling breathing

## Breathing focused:

### Beginning:

Get into a comfortable position.

### Middle:

Work out a stable breathing rhythm. Perhaps try to breathe in for three seconds, hold this breathe for two seconds, and then breathe out for three seconds. It can be helpful to count as you do this (e.g. IN: 1-2-3, HOLD: 1-2, OUT: 1-2-3, HOLD: 1-2).

### Ending:

Repeat this action for a few minutes. You should soon begin to feel more relaxed. If you were feeling dizzy then this should also get better after a few minutes.

## Body focused:

### Beginning:

Find somewhere comfortable and quiet where you won't be interrupted. You can either sit or lie down to practice this exercise. Begin by focusing on your breathing. Try to have a slow and comfortable pace. You could use the controlled breathing technique described earlier. Do this for a few minutes to prepare for the muscular relaxation exercise.

### Middle:

Try to tense each muscle group for around five seconds. Don't tense the muscle too tight. Focus on the sensations that this brings. Then relax your muscles for a similar length of time, and again, focus on how this feels. Then move onto the next muscle group. Try to remember to keep your breathing at a comfortable pace throughout. Below are some suggestions of muscle groups that you may wish to work through:

- Legs - point your toes and tense your muscles as if you were trying to stand up.
- Stomach - tense your stomach muscles.
- Arms - make fists and tense your muscles as if you were trying to lift something.
- Shoulders - shrug your shoulders. Lift them up towards your ears.

Face - make a frowning expression. Squeeze your eyes shut and screw up your nose. Clench your teeth.

### Ending:

It can be helpful to spend a few minutes just lying quietly in a relaxed state. See if you can notice any tension in your body and try to relax it. Otherwise, just let the tension be. If your mind wanders, try to bring your concentration back to your breathing.

Finally, count down silently and slowly: 5-4-3-2-1-0, and come out of the relaxation in your own time. See if it's possible to carry that relaxed feeling into whatever you do next.

## Self help: Distraction

Distraction is a good technique to fend off symptoms of anxiety and stress when they feel overwhelming. This can also give you space to deal with a situation in a more considered and positive manner. It is also helpful when you don't have the space or time to use a more proactive approach, such as a relaxation exercise.

Distraction simply involves trying to take your mind off uncomfortable symptoms or thoughts. You can do this by trying to focus on something unrelated. Often this helps them to pass. It is still important to remember that the symptoms of anxiety are not harmful or dangerous. Even if you didn't use distraction or relaxation techniques, nothing terrible would happen.

Ideas to help distract you from your troubling thoughts or anxiety include:

- Try to appreciate small details in your surroundings.
- Count backwards from 1000 in multiples of 7.
- Focus on your breathing, for example, how it feels to breathe in and out.
- Count things that you can see that begin with a particular letter.
- Visualise being in a pleasant, safe and comfortable environment (e.g. being on a beach).
- Listen to your favourite music. Try to pick out all the different instruments and sounds that you can hear.

**As with any relaxation exercise, it may take a few minutes before you begin to feel like it's working.**