

Anxiety

“Anxiety” is the word often used to describe the emotional state that is triggered by thoughts and feelings of fear or worry.

It is completely normal to feel anxious in response to certain events, or in the lead up to something happening (like an exam or a race).

Most people feel anxious from time to time - it can actually be helpful in keeping us alert, allowing us to focus, and motivating us to work harder or quicker.

However, anxiety becomes unhelpful when it becomes excessive, is present most of the time, impacts on someone’s daily functioning, or causes concerning physical symptoms.

Top tip - visiting a GP or health professional can be useful to rule out any medical cause of symptoms

Physical Symptoms

- Difficulty sleeping
- Racing heart
- Shortness of breath
- Tight chest
- Feeling/being sick
- Shaking
- Loss of appetite
- Sweating/clammy hands
- Feeling light headed or dizzy

Cognitive Symptoms

- Racing thoughts
- Catastrophising
- Expecting the worst
- Difficulty concentrating
- Brain fog
- Wanting to avoid places/people/things
- Feeling tearful or overwhelmed

Coping Strategies & Anxiety Management

Most strategies focus on either tackling the thoughts associated with anxiety, or “regulating” physically to reduce physical symptoms.

- Breathing exercises, such as paced breathing and square breathing
- Visualisation exercises
- TIPP - temperature, intense exercise, paced breathing, progressive muscle relaxation
- Mindfulness and grounding techniques
- Challenging automatic or negative thought patterns
- Graded exposure to stimulus that triggers anxiety
- Journalling or thought diaries to identify and understand triggers
- Confidence and self-esteem building

Additional Support and Resources

- Counselling - in school or externally via Lowdown or private practice counsellors (<https://thelowdown.info/> or www.counselling-directory.org.uk/)
- Wellbeing drop-ins, groups or workshops
- GP or school nurse
- www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/anxiety
- www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/supporting-a-young-person-struggling-with-anxiety/
- <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/anxiety-fear-panic/>