



Anxiety 101



WHAT IS ANXIETY

To identify and understand what anxiety is, it is important to understand the difference between Fear, Panic and Anxiety. These three similar emotions all play an important part to protect us in our day to day lives.

Fear

Panic

Anxiety



Fear

Fear is when we are in imminent danger, the body goes into fight or flight mode and receives a massive amount of adrenaline to help deal with the situation.

Panic

Panic is when the body reacts in the same way as fear but when there is no threat or imminent danger.



A typical Panic attack can be very traumatic as there is no danger to escape from.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a scaled down version of panic. The body is not in a full state of fear but the heart will be heightened slightly, adrenaline is on the rise, the body is in a state of preparing for danger, by being more alert. Anxiety should only be a temporary requirement but people suffering with Anxiety live with this ongoing feeling day to day. Their Anxiety can be triggered often or in specific irrational circumstances.

Treatments

It is important to consider all the options available to you before treating your anxiety. Sometimes the knee-jerk reaction is to take an anti-anxiety pill and hope that this pill will work its magic and cure you. Although this can sometimes be the case, this can also only be a short-term fix, or involve undesirable side effects.

As with all things in life, if you are trying to stop something from breaking it is important to establish the root cause. There may be a very logical reason why you are suffering from increased anxiety, such as a change in medication, particularly if it affects your hormones, a change in your diet, or the need to talk to a therapist or counsellor about an underlying incident in your life.



It may not be appropriate to try to fix any of the above with the use of anti-anxiety medication. As this would just cover up the problem or add to it.



Tips

Prescribed Medication and therapy are the go-to methods for treating anxiety but there are also a number of smaller less severe things you can try, either in conjunction or on their own, to avoid the need for medication.

1. Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing is deep breathing using the stomach, when people are nervous they tend to only breathe using their chest, their breathing quickens and tightens up. When this happens, it can turn the pH level of your blood more acidic, this tells the brain to go into fight or flight mode. Diaphragmatic breathing prevents this from happening and turns down activity in your body's stress response circuits



This makes diaphragmatic breathing the very best go-to quick fix for anxiety. You can do this anywhere, even in front of people, it only take 5 or 6 large breaths to start to take effect.

A simple video to show you how it is done:

[www.https://youtu.be/TUJ_GZDm28E?si=tm58SnfLJ5NIWHOB](https://youtu.be/TUJ_GZDm28E?si=tm58SnfLJ5NIWHOB)



Tips

2. Be in the moment

To be in the moment can be challenging but there are some simple ways to help, meditation is one. Although not for everyone, a simple hack is to combine it with our tip number 1 diaphragmatic breathing. Add closing your eyes and counting the breaths every time you inhale and exhale.



Kung Fu Panda (2008) - Grand Master Oogway

"Yesterday is history, Tomorrow is a mystery, but Today is a gift. That is why it is called the present"

Try not to let your mind wander, if and when it does just return to counting the breaths. Don't worry if your mind wanders and strays away as this is normal, the important thing is to bring it back on to the breath work.

There are also many hobbies and activities you can do which are great at making you be "in the moment". Such as our favourite, photography, but also art, writing, singing, acting and music.



Tips

3. Cold Water Therapy

“You can’t worry about the past or future when your freezing your bits off!!!”



There are several reasons why cold water therapy can help with anxiety:

1. The vagus nerve connects the brain with all your organs and activates the response of fight or flight and can directly control your level of anxiety.

It has been shown that cold water exposure activates the vagus nerve which has a calming result, slowing our breathing and stress levels.

2. Cold water immersion releases mood enhancing hormones that can improve symptoms of Anxiety and depression.

3. Builds up stress resilience by training your body to cope with regular controlled cold water exposure, you are placing your body into a state of stress. By building up your resilience to the cold can also build up your body's ability to handle other kinds of stress not just cold.

4. The positive feeling of achievement you get as you have just accomplished a tough task can release endorphins much like exercise, this positive feeling can reduce the feelings of anxiety.



Tips

4. Walking



Taking a walk and getting outside is a great way to live in the moment and hitting your reset button. There is a warning with this, it is important that you make sure you don't spend your time ruminating about your problems, listen to music, or go with a friend to keep your

to keep your mind off your troubles. If not, then skip the walk for a more stimulating form of exercise.

5. Exercise

“Exercise is a wonder drug!!!”

10 minutes of high intensity exercise has a powerful impact on the brains stress circuits and on our stress hormones. This will literally drop your stress levels and hits your serotonin circuits which have a soothing effect on your amygdala which is part of your brain that triggers your fight or flight response.





Tips

6. Reset yourself !



Hit the reset switch: this could be taking a nap, or having a bath, or a quick shower anything which can re-energise you and reset the switch on your day.

"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, Even you. " - Anne Lamott

7. Magnesium

Magnesium is naturally absorbed as we eat food and helps to keep us calm and has a natural anti-anxiety effect on the brain. Most diets in the UK do not provide enough magnesium. It is thought that as much as 70% of people may be magnesium deficient.



You can get more naturally by eating lots of leafy greens such as kale, and spinach, you can also take magnesium supplements, the most effective for brain function is magnesium threonate which you can purchase from most health shops. Take it 30 mins before bed and it will also help with your sleep.



Tips

8. Look after your Gut.



Your body is full of millions and millions of microbes which know how to hack into our brains. Our level of anxiousness is dependent on what is happening in our nervous system.

Our beneficial microbes can hack into our peripheral nervous system which connects the GUT to the Brain and turns down our level of adrenalin, our breathing and heart rate, and can affect the brain reducing our stress levels. The bad microbes are doing the opposite to us and can affect the brain in a negative way. By eating prebiotics and pro biotics you can make sure you have a healthy Gut and help to protect your mind from the inside out.

9. Limit your stimulates.

Some people are very sensitive to stimulates such as Caffeine or Nicotine, then again some people seem to not be affected so much. But if you are suffering with anxiety and you are also taking a lot of stimulates then you may want to cut them down to see if this has any positive effects.





Tips

10. Omega 3.



This can truly make a massive difference with your mental wellness and mood. It has an anti-inflammatory effect and works on your body and also the brain. Many of our modern-day diets lack omega 3, it would be best to take this naturally by eating more foods such as oily fish, but you can also take a supplement to help.

The most important part of the omega 3 to target the brain is the EPA content which ideally you would want a high dose of 1000MG of EPA a day. The EPA content should be shown on the back of the supplement container.

This may take a few weeks before taking effect and the effects can be like an anti-depressant. A slight warning, on rare occasions Omega 3 can also provide similar side effects, making someone to be less concerned with life, less of a perfectionist and a bit more laid back, for some people this is great, others may not want this type of effect.

11. Exposure Therapy

This is a very basic form of psychology, which has been used and practised for years with great effect. In a very basic form, generally when something makes us afraid or worried by exposing yourself to this tends to improve the negative thoughts and by avoiding it will make them worse.

Using this therapy supper tool can really help, but it comes with a warning, it is important to always do this in a controlled and safe method. Take small steps and slowly expose yourself to your fears.





Tips

12. Sun Light.



Light is literally a drug that hits your retina and then hits the centre of your brain that influences brain signalling, effecting our hormones, arousal senses, our body clock, and our serotonin. A lack of sunlight can have a negative effect on our brain and a lack of serotonin can increase our anxiety levels.

When you are indoors the level of light can be 100 x less than that of the sun which would normally produce light onto your eyes at 10,000Lux but indoors it is closer to 100Lux even with the lights on!

So, if you are not getting enough sunlight. Make sure you get outside particularly in the mornings which helps start your day and your body clock. You can also use a light box or SAD lamp which is useful in the winter on those shorter days.

13. Put it in the Freezer!

So, for our last tip, this one is a little strange but seems to work and will not cost you anything to try. If there is a particular problem, person, or situation causing you anxiety. Try writing it down on paper and then placing it in the freezer. This has been shown to lower anxiety, implanting the thought that you have dealt with the issue, and it has come to an end with some type of result. Although it sounds a little strange it seems to work, so give it a try.





Further Support

Anxiety UK

Anxiety UK

A user-led organisation that supports anyone with anxiety, phobias, panic attacks or other anxiety disorders.

Telephone: 03444 775 774

Text: 07537 416905

Address: Anxiety UK, Nunes House, 447 Chester Road,
Manchester,
M16 9HA

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