

CALM YOUR ANXIETY

A free guide to changing the relationship you have to your anxiety.



Anxiety is a state of mind brought about by a fear that lies in the future. When you don't know what the future holds, particularly when you're experiencing lots of change, like living through the pandemic, changing your job, perhaps undergoing relationship changes, or you've lost someone or something special to you... you may feel anxious. The thing to note is that anxiety is a perfectly natural state. In the absence of information, we are 'designed' to pay attention to 'threats' or 'danger' that might present. But that sense of 'alert' as a potentially useful mechanism can go a little 'bonkers' when you begin to add in external variables such as social media, news, and what you have been taught alongside your own personal experiences through life. The first step in dealing with anxiety is realising, and accepting that it is fuelled by your thoughts and your relationship to them. Change that relationship and the constant thinking and worrying about future that may flood you with negative thoughts and feelings will ease. In this guide you will learn how to take action on the things you can change in order to reduce and blow away your anxiety.

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EFFECTIVE TIPS TO MANAGE ANXIETY

Feeling anxious can lead to overthinking about all the possible permutations in the future. Spending time trying to bullet proof yourself against anything unforeseen, can leave you in a state of overwhelm- running ragged, or feeling completely paralysed. So what to do? Try these steps:

- 1) Acknowledge that it's ok to feel the way that you do. Spending the effort 'fighting' with the feeling won't help.
- 2) Instead, try to replace the sense of 'alert' or 'anxiety', with a sense of increased 'awareness'. For one thing it's a 'kinder' word!
- 3) Rather than focus your attention on all those factors external to you, that you cannot control, try and disarm your thinking process, peacefully. First we have to put down our thoughts. Our thoughts are our greatest 'weapon' when used unhelpfully.
- 4) One way is to do this is to bring your attention to your body. Focus your awareness on the sensations in your experience. Your breath is a good place to start - it's fundamentally the most reliable thing that you can count on. It is an anchor for certainty in your present moment. You can have mastery over it, even if you feel quite the opposite over any external variables. Included in this guide is a helpful breathing technique.
- 5) Become aware of your direct experience, your temperature, the beat of your heart, any tightness or constraints you can feel within your body. Just notice them. Don't try to change them, just register them. Ultimately, we calm the mind by coming out of the head. In the moment of direct experience. The best way to do that for yourself is to come back to the body- into the very cells of your being.
- 6) If you find yourself returning to your thoughts and getting embroiled in your thinkings, imagine each thought is a cloud, that you watch pass by as you stand still.
- 7) What would it be like to let those thoughts go? What would happen? Remember they are just your thoughts.

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FOCUSSING ON NOW

The only moment that belongs to us in its entirety, is 'now' and no sooner have we acknowledged it, the moment has gone, to join the past. Looking back on 'yesterday' is only useful to notice 'patterns' of behaviour, but never helpful in projecting how the future will look. Moreover, looking continuously forwards well into the future, into 'tomorrow' can only really be filled with presuppositions run away thinking, and expectations, which all lead to a sense of tension and anxiety.



Focus on now, 'today' - being totally in it. How you 'act' in your now is what shapes future outcomes. Don't be tempted to project your past into the that future of yours. 'Being present' means for a 'moment' letting go of 'thinking' and refraining from boarding the 'thought train'. I'm not for one moment suggesting abandoning goals and planning, but be mindful not to be so absorbed in the processes of these that you lose sight of all that is going on around you in the moment of your existence.

Ever stuck on coming back to your 'now'?- A good grounding exercise is "5 things"- Take the moment you are in to notice: 5 things you can see right now; 4 things you can touch right now; 3 things you can hear right now; 2 things you can smell right now; 1 thing you can taste right now. Employing all your senses will immediately connect you with 'being' in your 'now'. Olfactory and gustatory senses maybe harder to tap into in some situations, but kinaesthetic 'touch', visual 'sight' and auditory 'sound' modalities are a certainty no matter where you find yourself.

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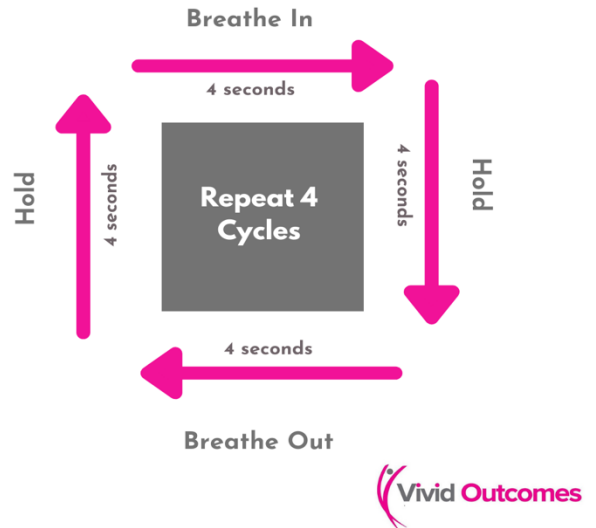
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BREATHING EXERCISES

The most beneficial and resourceful thing to do for yourself when you feel anxious is as mentioned to focus on your breathing. Try this short simple exercise: breathe 'big belly breaths'- diaphragmatic breaths where your abdomen expands on the in-breath and contracts and squeezes all the air out on the out-breath. It's a much deeper way of breathing than the shallower breaths from the chest that we might ordinarily take. When you breathe this way, try breathing for 4, holding it there for 4, breathing out for 4, holding there for 4 and breathing back in for 4 and so on. Repeat this for 4 cycles. This technique is generally referred to as 'box breathing'.



ASSESS YOURSELF

Some common symptoms of 'Anxiety': Excessive sweating; trembling or shaking; shortness of breath; afraid or scared; nausea; abdominal discomfort; unsteadiness/dizziness; fear of losing control; fear of dying; constant/persistent worry; unable to relax; nervous; difficulty sleeping; avoidance of certain situations. This is by no means an exhaustive list and how it is experienced is different for everyone.

If you want some help to manage your anxiety, I can help. Persistent anxiety, is your mind and body system telling you that you need to 'listen up' and 'pay attention' probably to something you are trying desperately to ignore. Whilst medication can alleviate symptoms in the short term, it's not necessarily the long term solution. It's better to get some support with the headspace too. Book an initial consultation with me.

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