

Top Tips for Managing Anxiety

Identify your Triggers

The first step in managing anxiety is to identify the situations/problems that are making you feel stressed. If you find this difficult try keeping a diary – watch out for times when you feel anxious through the day and write down what you were doing, who you were with, and what you were thinking at the time.

Develop an Action Plan

Some problems can be solved while others are unchangeable and have to be accepted. Once you've identified your triggers see if any of the situations are within your control, if they are, brainstorm possible solutions. Forget logistics and the feasibility of your ideas – just get your ideas onto paper.

Once you've brainstormed, consider the pros and cons of each of your ideas then select the solution that is most likely to help you solve your problem. Think about what resources you'll need to implement your plan and identify possible barriers and ways to overcome them.

Put your plan into action. If it doesn't work, go back and try a different solution.

Make Lifestyle Changes

Look at your work/life balance. Many of us put off leisure time to meet deadlines, but a busy work life with little downtime can increase your stress and anxiety. Try to leave work at work and if your workload doesn't allow this consider what you need to put in place to make it possible. Can you delegate some tasks to other people? Can you aim for 80% of what you consider perfect? Do you need to speak to your boss about your workload?

Make time for regular exercise, it's a great way to manage stress and will also help to boost your immune system.

Reduce your caffeine intake. Caffeine is a stimulant and can exacerbate anxious symptoms.

Manage Your Thoughts

When we're anxious we tend to catastrophise about the future and think about worst case scenarios. Thinking about worst case scenarios makes them seem more likely and this increases anxiety.

When you're feeling anxious write down your thoughts. Look at your thoughts objectively and ask yourself: Am I being realistic or am I focusing on the negatives? What's the worst thing that could happen, what's the best thing that could happen, what's the most likely outcome? Will this matter in 12 months' time? If my friend was worried about this, what would I say to them?

ANXIETY

Everyone feels anxious sometimes like when a deadline's looming or when there's an important presentation to give at work, but there's a difference between helpful and problem anxiety.

It might not feel like it, but anxiety can actually be helpful. Mild anxiety motivates us and helps us perform to the best of our ability.

Anxiety starts to be a problem when our "anxiety switch" gets turned on when it doesn't need to be (when we're not actually in danger), and when it starts to inhibit rather than enhance our performance.

Signs of problem anxiety are:

- Worry that's hard to stop
- Nausea
- Irritability, restlessness or edginess
- Sleep problems
- Tense muscles
- Concentration problems
- Anxiety that interferes with everyday activities

This tips sheet covers basic strategies for managing problem anxiety.

If your anxiety persists, speak to your GP about a referral to a clinical psychologist.