

Mental Health Self Care Strategy

Coping with Anxiety

12 steps to help you cope with anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, worry or fear. It affects both our emotional and physical sensations and can lead to panic attacks.

Here are some strategies to avoid this.

1 Talking

Try talking to someone that you trust. Talking to someone about what's making you anxious can help. You may find that they have experienced a similar problem, so can talk you through it. It may be that just having someone to listen to you and showing they care can help.



2 Breathing

Try a breathing exercise. You may find that this will help you to manage anxiety and feel calmer. Always remember to breathe. Take your time to inhale. It is a simple thing to do but it can be forgotten in panic attacks.



3 Shifting your focus

You may find it helpful to shift your focus from the anxiety you are feeling. Look at a flower, a picture or something else that you find interesting or comforting. Really notice the detail, the colour or any smells or sounds. Use fiddle toys like puzzles, stress balls or a doodle pad to keep your hands and mind busy.



4 Listen to music

Listening to music that you find peaceful or that you enjoy can help you to feel calmer. Make up a personal playlist, put your headphones on, lay on your bed, close your eyes and lose yourself in the music.



5 Reassure yourself



You may find it helpful to tell yourself that the symptoms you are experiencing are actually caused by anxiety. It is not really dangerous, and it will pass. This can help you to feel calmer and less afraid of future attacks. Accept that this is how you feel at the moment but that it won't last.

6 Physical exercise

You may find that physical exercise can help you to manage anxiety and panic attacks. Going for a walk or a run can help you to get some time to yourself to think things through, away from everyday stresses. Physical training, playing with movement through things like gymnastics, yoga or circuit training can help by allowing you to have some fun. Going for a walk especially with a dog even if you can't go far can help to relax your mind.



7 Keep a diary

Making a note of what happens to you each time you get anxious or have a panic attack can help you spot patterns in what triggers these experiences for you, so you can think about how to deal with them in the future. Keep a photo diary of all the positive things that you do. This will help you realise you can do this. When you sit in a café or go for a walk, take a picture to record what you have done. When you next feel scared look back on it and remember what you have done - it may encourage you to do it again or even to do it more often.



8 Eat a healthy diet



You may find it easier to relax if you avoid stimulants like coffee, cigarettes and alcohol. Some people also find eating a healthy diet helps them to manage anxiety better.

9 Complimentary therapies



Yoga, meditation, aromatherapy, massage, reflexology, herbal treatments, Bach flower remedies and hypnotherapy are all types of complimentary therapies that you could try. See if they work for you. You might find that one or more of these methods can help you to relax, sleep better, and manage the symptoms of anxiety and panic attacks. Many chemists and health shops stock remedies and can offer advice.

10 Support groups



A support group can give you the opportunity to share common experiences and ways of coping with others who are facing similar challenges. It is sometimes comforting to know that you are not alone. There are many support groups online such as www.youngminds.org.uk or www.anxietycare.org.uk

11 Happy Box



Create your own Happy Box. Take a box, cover it in your favourite wrapping paper and fill it with things that make you happy. You could collect together your favourite photographs or postcards, a playlist of favourite songs, an aromatherapy candle or something else that relaxes you, a prized possession, or anything else that makes you smile or feel happy. When you are feeling a little low, open your Happy Box, look through it and think about the things in there that make you feel like smiling.

12 A pamper session

Organise a sleep over with one or two close friends. Have popcorn, hot chocolate with marshmallows and plenty of snacks. You could order pizza and ice cream. Watch a romantic film or a scary movie or organise a gaming session well into the night.

