



UNDERSTANDING

ANXIETY

- What is Anxiety?Page 2
- What can Anxiety feel like?..... Page 3
- How can I manage my Anxiety?..... Page 4
- Exercises for Anxiety..... Page 5
- Useful apps and websites..... Page 8

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of unease when we are worried, tense, or afraid particularly about things that are about to happen, or things we fear happening in the future. It is common for everyone to experience feelings of anxiety sometimes, particularly in times of stress and uncertainty. But if your feelings of anxiety are extreme and last for a long period of time and are starting to interfere with your life, you may need to start looking for some ways to manage it. How our body deals with anxiety is known as the fight or flight response.

How the Fight or Flight Response Works

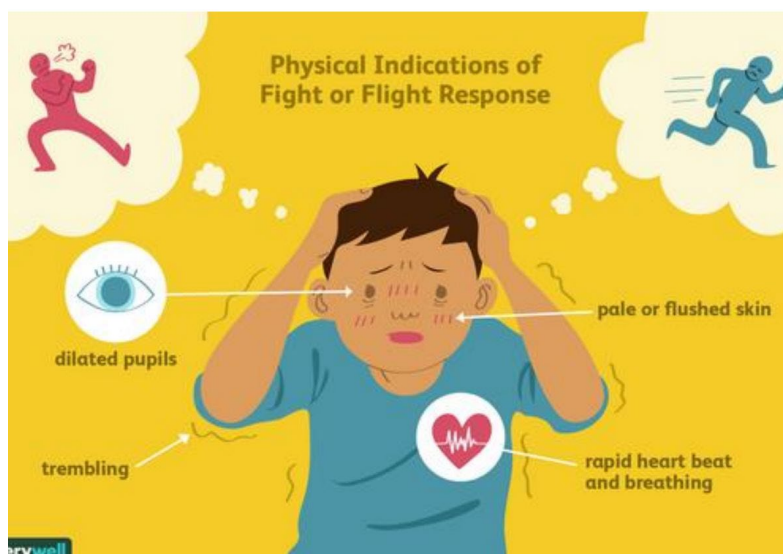
The fight-or-flight response (also known as the acute stress response), refers to a physiological reaction that occurs when we are in the presence of something that is terrifying (mentally or physically).

The fight-or-flight response is triggered by the release of hormones that prepare your body to either stay and deal with a threat or to run away to safety.

3 offtherecord-banes.co.uk The term 'fight-or-flight' represents the choices that our ancient ancestors had when faced with danger in their environment, there is also a third F, freeze. They could either fight, flee or freeze. In either case, the physiological and psychological response to stress prepares the body to react to the danger.

In the 1920s, American physiologist Walter Cannon was the first to describe the fight-or-flight response. Cannon realised that a chain of rapidly occurring reactions inside the body helped to mobilise the body's resources to deal with threatening circumstances.

Today, the fight-or-flight response is recognised as part of the first stage of Hans Selye's general adaptation syndrome (a theory describing the stress response).





What does anxiety feel like?

Anxiety can feel different for everyone, but some of the common signs and symptoms of anxiety are below:

Physical:

- Dilated pupils
- Pale or flushed skin
- Rapid heart rate and breathing.
- Trembling
- Nausea
- Tight muscles and headaches
- Feeling dizzy or light-headed
- You might experience a panic attack (see our separate pages on panic attacks)

Emotional:

- Feeling nervous, wobbly, or dreading something bad happening
- Feeling paranoid- especially around other people being able to see that you are anxious
- Busy mind full of racing thoughts
- Focusing on negative experiences/memories and re-living them over and over.
- Feeling restless and unfocused
- Feeling numb

You may also experience problems sleeping, low mood, a lowered immune system. If you are anxious for a long time you may also struggle with staying in work/school, developing/maintaining relationships and finding activities where you feel very comfortable.

How can I manage my anxiety?

It is natural to avoid situations or triggers that make your anxiety worse. But sometimes you need to face up to things that make us anxious and come up with methods of coping so you don't have to avoid and could hopefully break the cycle of fear.

Relaxation response: Dr. Herbert Benson specialises in learning how people can counter the stress response by using a combination of approaches that elicit the relaxation response. These include deep abdominal breathing, focus on a soothing word (such as peace or calm), visualization of tranquil scenes, repetitive prayer, yoga, and tai chi.

Most of the research using objective measures to evaluate how effective the relaxation response is at countering chronic stress have been conducted in people with hypertension and other forms of heart disease. Those results suggest the technique may be worth trying — although for most people it is not a cure-all. For example, researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital conducted a double-blind, randomized controlled trial of 122 patients with hypertension, ages 55 and older, in which half were assigned to relaxation response training and the other half to a control group that received information about blood pressure control. After eight weeks, 34 of the people who practiced the relaxation response — a little more than half — had achieved a systolic blood pressure reduction of more than 5 mm Hg, and were therefore eligible for the next phase of the study, in which they could reduce levels of blood pressure medication they were taking. During that second phase, 50% were able to eliminate at least one blood pressure medication — significantly more than in the control group, where only 19% eliminated their medication.

Physical activity: People can use exercise to stifle the build-up of stress in several ways. Exercise, such as taking a brisk walk shortly after feeling stressed, not only deepens breathing but also helps relieve muscle tension. Movement therapies such as yoga, tai chi, and qi gong combine fluid movements with deep breathing and mental focus, all of which can induce calm.

Social support: Confidants, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, relatives, spouses, and companions all provide a life-enhancing social net — and may increase longevity. It's not clear why, but the buffering theory holds that people who enjoy close relationships with family and friends receive emotional support that indirectly helps to sustain them at times of chronic stress and crisis. Speaking to someone you trust can help, especially if they have been experiencing similar feelings.

Keeping a diary: Keeping a note of what happens each time you get anxious can help you spot patterns to your anxiety and maybe identify specific situations or triggers that bring your anxiety on. It can also help to keep a note of when you were able to successfully manage it.

Exercises that might ease my anxiety?

Breathing Exercises:

Deep breathing is a simple technique that is excellent for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it is also discreet and easy to use at any time or place.

4-7-8 Breathing

1. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
2. Hold your breath for a count of seven.
3. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight.
4. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

The 5-4-3-2-1 grounding Technique

Take a deep breath and...

1. Acknowledge five things that you can see around you.
2. Acknowledge four things that you can touch around you.
3. Acknowledge three things you can hear around you.
4. Acknowledge two things around you that you can smell.
5. Acknowledge one thing around you that you can taste.

Make a self-soothe box

If you often have repeated feelings of anxiety a self-soothe or mood box is a great way to manage those feelings and help you feel more relaxed. Each self-soothe box can be different and filled with things that are relevant to the individual and make you feel more positive. Some ideas of where to start are to focus on having a range of sensory things in the box to enable you to focus your mind on. You could include, something you like the smell of or a smell that is calming, a popular choice is lavender. Something you could touch, examples could either be something soft and soothing to feel comforted or something to use for stress relief like a stress ball. Something you can look at this could be a photograph, an old toy a book or poem something that brings you joy and makes you feel calm and so on. Something to hear could be a favourite CD or DVD. The things that go into the box must help to change your mood when you are feeling anxious, tense or overwhelmed.

Exercises that might ease my anxiety?

Setting aside worry time

Worries and anxieties are a normal part of life. It's natural to worry about a job interview, first date or a missed bill. But a worry can become excessive when it is persistent and uncontrollable.

It can begin to feel like your worries are taking over your life.

Scheduling a "worry time" is a technique used to help you develop more control over your worries and this is how you can do it.

Step 1: Schedule a worry time for each day for a week. Put it in the calendar, jot it down. Try and set 15-30 minutes, this will be your worry time. It is best not to schedule it just before bed.

Step 2: During your worry time slot, write down all your worries that have been on your mind. You don't have to figure out solutions, it's important to get them out.

Step 3: Between worry times if you start to worry or think of a new worry tell yourself to let it go, write it down to focus on during your next worry time and try and find an activity to do. This will be hard the first couple of times but with time it gets easier.

See the example below.

I will allot myself ___ minutes (15-30, no more!) of worry time a day, in which I can spend some time sitting and worrying. My worry time will happen

at __:___ every day, and I will do it in/at/on _____

(not my bedroom or anywhere too comfortable where I might start to 'enjoy' the worrying).

Outside of my worry time, if a worry thought comes into my mind I will write it down (on my phone or a post-it note) to come back to in my worry time, and will then

'postpone' the worry using one of the below methods:

- Go for a run or a walk and pay close attention to the things around me (other people, the plants, the weather, the sounds etc.)
- Do a guided meditation or yoga session from online
- Call someone, and chat about something OTHER than worries
- Read a book
- Look through photos that remind me of positive memories

Measure your anxiety

ANXIETY SCALE

Minecraft Edition

Minecraft Character



@therapist.mallory13

Emotion

A Creeper feels:
out of control! I will do some of these...scream, cry, throw/break, or kick things.

A Zombie feels:
very angry! I might say mean things, call people names, and lose control of my body.

An Enderman feels:
worried and anxious.
I want to get away right now.

Steve feels like:
it might be tough for me listen. I think I can handle it though.

Alex feels:
good today.
I'm calm and positive!

Skills I can use

@mallorylpcimft

Helpful Information

APPS:

WorryTree: WorryTree's mission is to help make a positive difference to your daily life, providing supportive, useful tools for you to manage your worries in a better way, transforming your thought habits for the long-term benefit of your mental wellbeing.

Calm: Especially if anxiety can interfere with sleep. Has meditation and sleep stories, relaxing music to ease your stress.

Headspace: Everyday mindfulness and meditation for Stress, Anxiety, Sleep, Focus, Fitness and more.

SAM: Self-help anxiety management app

What's up: free app utilising some CBT and ACT methods to help cope with anxiety, depression, anger, stress and more.

MindShift: provides resources to help manage anxiety including healthier thinking, a chill out zone and taking action

Websites Mind

www.mind.org.uk advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people.

www.childline.org.uk

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/school-college-and-work/school-college/exam-stress/>
(stress with exams)

<https://www.childline.org.uk/globalassets/info-and-advice/school-work-and-college/school-and-college/exam-stress/beat-exam-stress.pdf> (pdf Beat exam stress)

Info to deal with anxiety <https://www.anxietybc.com/anxiety-PDF-documents>

Tools to cope with anxiety

<http://youth.anxietybc.com/>

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk>

<http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp/>

Radio 4 program how to manage your anxiety (Video how to manage worries)

videohttp://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03rwr72?intc_type=singletheme&intc_location=radio4&intc_campaign=radio4infour&intc_linkname=vidclip_manageworries_contentcard3http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03rwr72?intc_type=singletheme&intc_location=radio4&intc_campaign=radio4infour&intc_linkname=vidclip_manageworries_contentcard3

Mood juice (selfhelp with anger/anxiety/social anxiety/stress....)

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk>

Mood gym

<https://moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome/new/splash>

Think you know (advise how to stay safe with social media)

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>