



Supplementary Document



Understanding anxiety

Anxiety is a natural response to stress or a perceived threat, characterised by feelings of uneasiness, apprehension, or worry. It involves a range of physical, emotional, and cognitive symptoms, such as increased heart rate, restlessness, and intrusive thoughts.

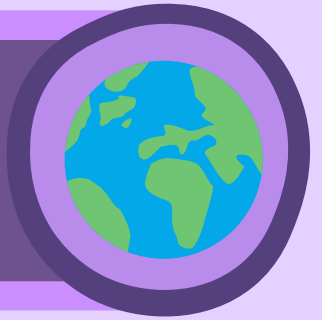
- Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health disorders globally. It is recognised as a leading cause of disability worldwide
- The difference between stress and anxiety is stress is a response to external pressures or challenges, while anxiety is a heightened, often irrational, anticipation of future threats, leading to excessive worry and nervousness.
- Anxiety can have a significant impact on an individual's wellbeing (both physical and mental), as well as having a huge impact on job performance and job satisfaction.



Causes & triggers



Biological factors: Biological factors such as genetic predispositions and imbalances in neurotransmitters, can contribute to an individual's susceptibility to anxiety.



Environmental factors: External influences like upbringing, early life experiences, trauma, and exposure to chronic stressors in the environment can trigger anxiety.



Psychological factors: Individual differences in cognitive processes, coping mechanisms, and personality traits may influence the development or exacerbation of anxiety.



Work-related stressors: Pressures and demands in the workplace, including deadlines, workload, interpersonal dynamics, and job insecurity, can be significant triggers for anxiety.

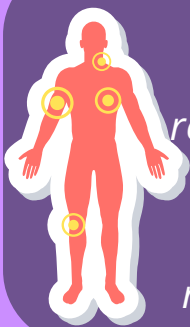


Personal life stressors: Stressful events such as relationship challenges, financial difficulties, health concerns, and major life changes, can contribute to the onset or exacerbation of anxiety symptoms.



Signs & symptoms

Here are some of the ways anxiety can manifest. Please note that this will vary from person to person and the symptoms mentioned are not exhaustive.



Physical symptoms of anxiety encompass increased heart rate, shallow breathing, muscle tension, restlessness, gastrointestinal discomfort, fatigue, trouble sleeping, sweating, trembling, and dizziness. These manifestations are linked to the body's "fight or flight" response, activated in perceived threatening situations.

Emotional symptoms of anxiety encompass excessive worry, fear, restlessness, irritability, difficulty concentrating, a sense of dread, heightened alertness, and pervasive unease. These feelings, varying among individuals, can disrupt mood and daily functioning.



Behavioural symptoms of anxiety manifest in observable actions and reactions, including avoidance behaviours, procrastination, decision-making difficulties, sleep disruptions, and changes in eating habits. Repetitive actions like nail-biting or pacing may serve as outlets for nervous energy.

Signs & symptoms

Cognitive symptoms of anxiety include excessive worry, racing thoughts, heightened alertness, difficulty concentrating, intrusive thoughts, impending doom, negative self-talk, and catastrophising. Recognising these disruptions in thought patterns is vital for a comprehensive approach to anxiety management.



Panic attacks are a common symptom of anxiety, characterised by sudden and intense periods of overwhelming fear and physical discomfort. During a panic attack, individuals may experience symptoms such as rapid heart rate, shortness of breath, trembling, and a sense of impending doom, often reaching peak intensity within minutes.

An anxiety disorder is a mental health condition characterised by persistent and excessive worry, fear, or anxiety that significantly interferes with daily life. Common anxiety disorders include Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Social Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Phobias, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).





Anxiety reducing techniques

Here are some anxiety-reducing techniques that can be used in the moment:

- **Deep Breathing:** Practice deep, diaphragmatic breathing to calm the nervous system. Inhale slowly through the nose, hold briefly, and exhale through pursed lips.
- **Grounding Techniques:** Focus on your senses to ground yourself in the present. Name five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR):** Systematically tense and then release each muscle group in the body to release tension and promote relaxation.
- **Visualisation:** Picture a calming scene or imagine a place where you feel safe and at peace. Visualise the details to immerse yourself in that mental space.
- **Mindful Breathing:** Pay close attention to your breath, focusing on each inhalation and exhalation. This simple mindfulness technique can help center your thoughts.

Anxiety reducing techniques



Here are some anxiety-reducing techniques that can be used in the moment:

- **5-4-3-2-1 Technique:** Acknowledge five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste to bring attention to your surroundings.
- **Square Breathing:** Inhale for a count of four, hold for four counts, exhale for four counts, and pause for four counts. Repeat this square breathing pattern.
- **Affirmations:** Repeat positive affirmations to counter negative thoughts. Affirmations can focus on self-compassion, resilience, and coping abilities.
- **Distraction:** Engage in a simple, absorbing task to redirect your mind. This could be counting backward, solving a puzzle, or focusing on a specific object.
- **Body Scan:** Mentally scan your body for areas of tension. Consciously release tension in each area, starting from your toes and moving upward.

Strategies for the mind - **Mindfulness**

1

Mindfulness & meditation:

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and aware in the current moment, without judgment or distraction.



How to be mindful:

Find a quiet space and focus on your breath, observing each inhale and exhale. Redirect your attention to the present moment whenever your mind wanders. Engage your senses, notice the details around you, and bring awareness to your thoughts without judgment. Regularly set aside time for mindful activities like meditation, deep breathing, or simply being fully present in everyday tasks.

Strategies for the mind - CBT



2

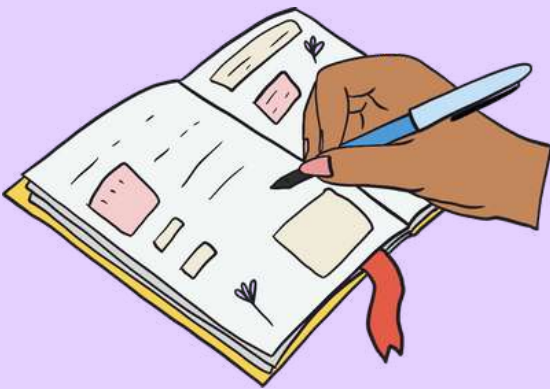
Cognitive behavioural techniques (CBT):

Involve identifying and challenging negative thought patterns and behaviours.

How to do this:

Implementing cognitive-behavioral techniques for anxiety involves identifying and challenging negative thought patterns. Begin by recognising irrational thoughts, questioning their validity, and replacing them with more realistic and positive alternatives. Additionally, practice relaxation techniques and gradually expose yourself to anxiety-provoking situations, building resilience over time.

Strategies for the mind- **Journaling**



3

Journaling (expressive writing):

Journaling provides a structured outlet for self-expression, fostering insight, clarity, and emotional regulation.

Prompts for journaling to help anxiety:

- Write about a recent situation that triggered anxiety and explore the associated thoughts and feelings.
- Reflect on moments of accomplishment and personal strengths to boost self-esteem.
- Track daily stressors and note how you responded, identifying effective coping strategies.
- Write a letter to yourself, offering encouragement and kindness during difficult times.



Strategies for the mind - professional support

4

Professional support:

Therapy aids anxiety by offering a supportive environment to explore root causes, learn coping strategies, and develop skills for symptom management.



Types of therapy for anxiety:

If you are experiencing anxiety, consider exploring evidence-based therapy options, such as, CBT, Exposure therapy, Mindfulness-based therapy, Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), Acceptance & commitment therapy, Psychodynamic therapy, Interpersonal therapy, Eye movement desensitisation & reprocessing.

Strategies for the body - **Exercise**



5

Regular physical activity:

Incorporate regular exercise into your routine, as physical activity is linked to improved mood, reduced anxiety, and better overall mental health.

Practical tips to exercise more:

To initiate a fitness routine, start small and gradually increase intensity. Choose enjoyable activities like walking or dancing, integrate them into your daily routine, and set realistic goals. Find a workout buddy for accountability, explore home workouts online, and vary your activities. Use fitness apps for tracking, and prioritise consistency over intensity for a sustainable routine.

Strategies for the body - **Sleep hygiene**

6

Develop healthy sleep habits:

Establish a consistent sleep schedule and prioritise good sleep hygiene to support mental and emotional resilience.



Practical tips for sleep hygiene:

Implementing good sleep hygiene involves maintaining a consistent sleep schedule, establishing a relaxing bedtime routine, and optimising your sleep environment. Limit screen exposure before bed, be mindful of your diet, and avoid excessive napping. Pay attention to your sleep position and seek natural light exposure for a well-rounded approach to better sleep quality.

Strategies for your body - **Social support**

7

Social connection & support network:

Foster meaningful social connections, both at work and in personal life, as social support is shown to reduce anxiety levels.



Practical tips for building support:

Fostering social support involves initiating regular social interactions, joining clubs or groups, and volunteering in the community. Attend social events, reconnect with old friends, and use technology and social media mindfully. Open up and share with others, practice active listening, and encourage quality connections within your social network.

Strategies for your body - **Nutrition**



8

Eat nutritious food:

Balanced nutrition is essential for anxiety as it promotes optimal brain function and mood regulation through the provision of essential nutrients.

Practical tips for a balanced diet:

Promoting a balanced diet involves incorporating a variety of fruits and vegetables, choosing whole grains, and including lean proteins. Consume healthy fats, stay hydrated, and limit processed sugars, processed foods, and alcohol. Monitor caffeine intake, practice mindful eating, and plan and prepare meals. Consider seeking professional guidance for personalised dietary advice.

Other strategies for you

Other strategies you may want to consider:

- **Mind-Body Interventions:** Practices like yoga and tai chi integrate physical postures, breath control, and mindfulness to reduce anxiety and improve overall well-being.
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR):** PMR involves systematically tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups to release physical tension and promote relaxation.
- **Self-Compassion Practices:** Developing self-compassion through exercises and mindful awareness can foster a kinder relationship with oneself, alleviating anxiety.
- **Aromatherapy:** Certain scents, such as lavender or chamomile, have been associated with relaxation and stress reduction. Aromatherapy can be used through essential oils, candles, or diffusers.
- **Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS):** Techniques like deep belly breathing, singing, and exposure to cold can stimulate the vagus nerve, offering a calming effect on the nervous system.



Other strategies for you

- **Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS):** TMS is a non-invasive procedure that uses magnetic fields to stimulate nerve cells in the brain and has shown promise in treating anxiety disorders.
- **Hypnotherapy:** Guided hypnosis sessions can help individuals achieve a state of deep relaxation, potentially reducing anxiety symptoms.
- **Laughter Therapy:** Laughter has been linked to the reduction of stress hormones, and laughter therapy involves intentional laughter exercises to promote well-being.
- **Art and Music Therapy:** Engaging in creative activities like art or music can provide a non-verbal outlet for expressing emotions and reducing anxiety.
- **Herbal Supplements:** Some herbal remedies, such as passionflower or valerian root, have been studied for their potential calming effects. Please consult your doctor before trying supplements.
- **Acupuncture:** This traditional Chinese medicine involves inserting thin needles into specific points on the body, potentially releasing endorphins and serotonin, contributing to mood regulation



Creating a supportive work environment



Open communication:

Encourage open conversations about mental health concerns, to promote understanding.

Mental health policies:

Establish mental health-supportive policies focusing on confidentiality and non-discrimination.



Training for managers:

Provide training for managers to recognise signs of anxiety and respond empathetically.

Flexible work arrangements:

Advocate for flexible work arrangements & reasonable accommodations if applicable.



Creating a supportive work environment



Workspace design:

Create a comfortable and calming workspace, incorporating elements that promote well-being.

Stress-reduction initiatives:
Introduce stress-reduction initiatives, such as mindfulness sessions or wellness programs.



Promote work-life balance:

Emphasise the importance of work-life balance to reduce overall stress.

*Reflect on how you can introduce customised initiatives to cultivate a supportive work environment that aligns with the specific dynamics of **your company**. What measures can be taken to enhance mental health and well-being among your team?*

How to support someone with anxiety



Active listening

Regular check-ins

Offer assistance

Respect boundaries

Be mindful of language

Educate yourself

Provide resources

Recognition & appreciation

Encourage self-care

Ask open-ended questions

Normalise conversations



Signposting suggestions for anxiety



UK signposting resources:

1. **Samaritans:** Offering confidential emotional support for those in crisis.
 - Website: <https://www.samaritans.org/>
2. **Mind:** Mental health charity providing information and support.
 - Website: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
3. **Rethink Mental Illness:** Offers support and information for people affected by mental health issues.
 - Website: <https://www.rethink.org/>
4. **Hub of Hope:** A platform connecting individuals to local mental health services.
 - Website: <https://hubofhope.co.uk/>
5. **NHS Mental Health Services:** Information and access to mental health services provided by the National Health Service. NHS Talking Therapies, offers a range of treatments for common mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression.
 - Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service>
6. **Anxiety UK:** A charity providing support for individuals with anxiety disorders.
 - Website: <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>



Signposting suggestions for anxiety

Global signposting resources:

1. **Befrienders Worldwide:** Global network of emotional support helplines.
 - **Website:** <https://befrienders.org/>
2. **BetterHelp:** Online counselling platform connecting individuals with licensed therapists globally.
 - **Website:** <https://www.betterhelp.com/>
3. **7 Cups:** Online emotional support through chat with trained listeners.
 - **Website:** <https://www.7cups.com/>
4. **World Health Organisation (WHO) Mental Health Resources:** Global mental health information and resources provided by WHO.
 - **Website:** https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health#tab=tab_1
5. **Psych Central:** Online mental health resources and support community.
 - **Website:** <https://psychcentral.com/>
6. **Talkspace:** Online therapy platform providing access to licensed therapists worldwide.
 - **Website:** <https://www.talkspace.com/>