

Anxiety: Young Person's Fact Sheet

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal emotion that everyone will feel at some point in their lives. It can be difficult to control and can impact our lives by making it difficult to do certain things.

Symptoms of anxiety

Can you spot any of your symptoms?



Emotions

nervous

scared

sad

frustration

frightened

panicky

Physical Feelings

noticeably fast, strong or irregular heart beat

dry mouth

dizziness

muscle ache/tension

shaking

sweating

headache

feel sick

trembling

stomach ache

pins and needles



Are these feelings normal?

YES! These emotions/physical feelings are caused by our body's natural reaction. This is called the Fight or Flight response and is how our body reacts to something it sees as dangerous.

Why does this happen?

We all have the same automatic response to danger called the **FIGHT** or **FLIGHT** response. Humans developed this as cave men because it was a much more dangerous time to live back then (think running away from saber tooth tigers and hunting for food).

The fight or flight response meant that cave men's bodies went into survival mode whenever their brains sensed danger. This meant their heart rate and blood pressure would increase so they had a better chance of running away or fighting the danger!

Even though we don't face the same dangers today, our brains and bodies still react in the same way to the things we see as dangerous, scary or worrying. This means our increased heart rate and blood pressure causes us to feel anxious!



**It's like a
faulty smoke
alarm...**

Imagine you have a smoke alarm that is overly sensitive and goes off all of the time, even when there isn't a real fire. Our Fight or Flight response is just like this - it goes off and causes physical changes in our bodies, even if there isn't any real danger.

**Remember!
These feelings are
normal and are
caused by our body's
natural reactions!**

The problem with anxiety

Feeling anxious can cause us to feel uncomfortable physical feelings in our body as well as negative thoughts in our head. It is these feelings and thoughts that can stop us from doing things!

Negative Automatic Thoughts (NATS)

NATS are negative thoughts that happen automatically and can seem to come out of nowhere and are almost always untrue! By taking notice of our thoughts, we can challenge and change them rather than just believing them to be true.

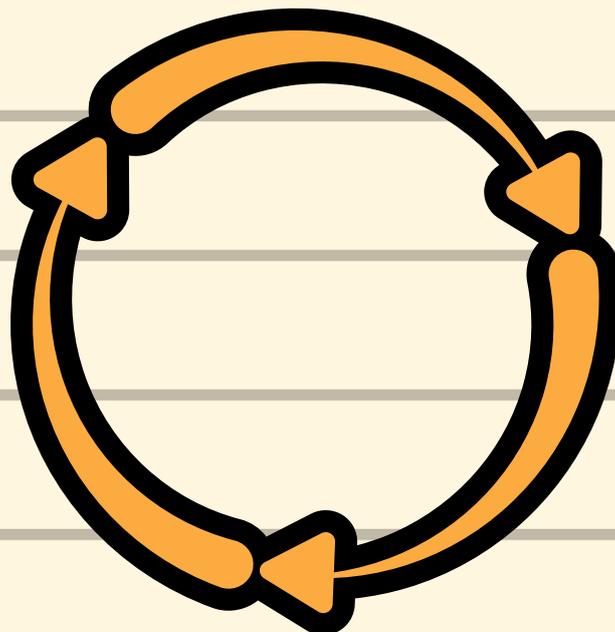


It's a vicious cycle!

Thoughts
Negative automatic thoughts

Behaviours
Leave or avoid the situation

Feelings
Scared, worried, sad



Physical Feelings
Shaky, sick, heart beating too fast, heavy breathing

What should I do to feel better?

The important thing to remember is that you're in control of your body and brain. You can go against what the negative thought is telling you!

You can do this in 2 ways:

1) Challenge your thoughts

2) Face your fears

1) Challenge your negative thoughts

Use the table to help to start changing your negative thinking to more positive thinking.

negative thought	evidence to support this thought	evidence that does NOT support this thought	different thought (positive)

2) Face your fears (don't avoid the situation!)

Your body and brain will tell you that you can't do things because it makes you feel too anxious.

However, YOU have the control over your body and brain. You can prove to your anxiety that you CAN do these things. So go out and prove your anxiety wrong!

Remember! Your body can only physically stay extremely anxious for a short amount of time before it starts to get tired so, if you stay in the situation, your anxiety will come down on its own.

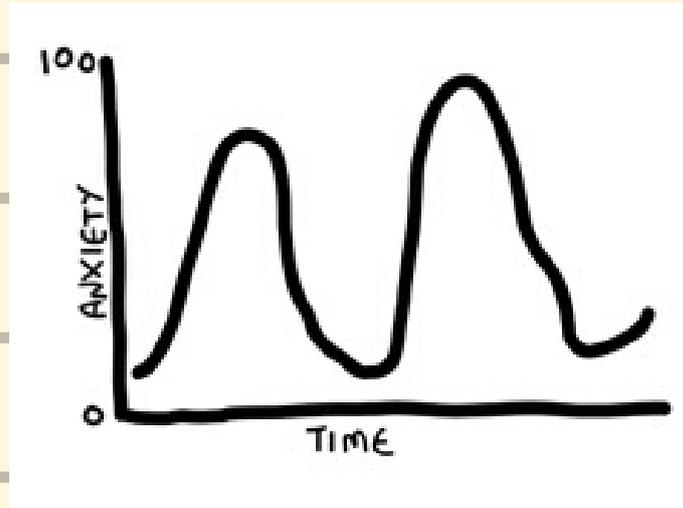
Also, by staying in the situation, you are teaching your brain and body that nothing bad will happen.

Top Tip!

Set yourself some goals and it will make it easier to achieve what you want to. Start off small and slowly build your way up to the situation where you feel the most anxious.

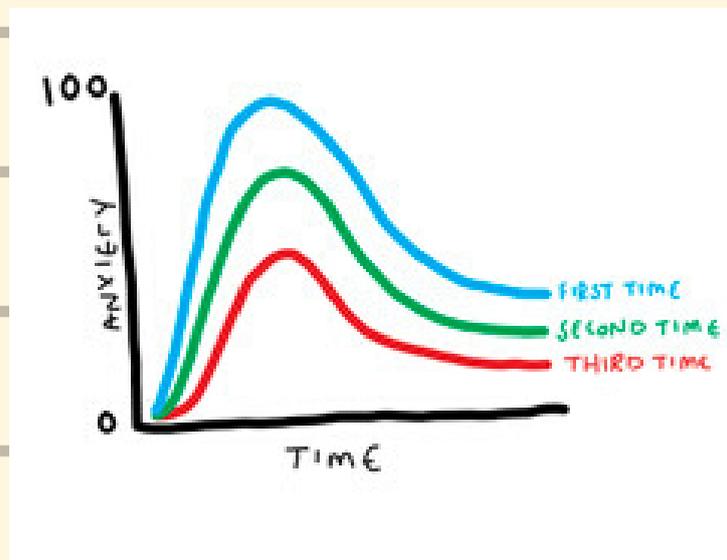
Remember, your goals should be realistic and achievable.

What will happen if I keep avoiding situations that cause anxiety...



By avoiding or leaving the situation every time you feel anxious, your body and brain is learning to fear that situation. You might feel better for a little while every time you leave, but next time your anxiety will be even worse!

What will happen when I face my fears...



By facing your fears and staying in the situation until your anxiety has at least halved, you are teaching your brain and body that there is nothing to be scared of. The longer you stay/the more times you do it, the less anxious you will feel!

Tips for managing anxiety

Getting regular exercise, eating a healthy/balanced diet and learning to relax all help to reduce anxiety.

- 1 Go for a walk/jog**
- 2 Make sure you get enough sleep**
- 3 Plan healthy meals for the week**
- 4 Download a mindfulness app**
- 5 Go to a yoga class**
- 6 Avoid caffeine/lots of sugar**
- 7 Meditate**
- 8 Do something that makes you happy**
- 9 Take a bath**
- 10 Talk to a friend**

Or, create your own list!