

What is Anxiety?

Feeling anxious sometimes is completely **normal**. Anxiety is part of our body's natural response to danger or threat.

However, sometimes anxiety can become a serious problem if it's:

- having a **significant negative impact** on your life
- **Stopping you** from doing the things you want/need to do
- **lasting a long time**

This is when anxiety can be scary, overwhelming and difficult to cope with. But, there is support available and things you can do to help.

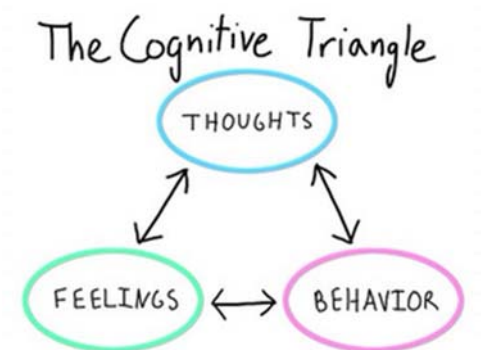
Common symptoms

- **Feeling nervous, worried, on edge, fearful**
- **Constantly worrying**
- **“Overthinking”** – negative and repetitive thoughts
- Feeling as if **something bad** is going to happen
- **Physical symptoms** like a racing heart, quicker breathing, shaking, butterflies, chest pain, nausea

What causes and keeps anxiety going?

Anxiety can be caused by stressful life events, past experiences, low self-esteem and genetics. Often, our thoughts, feelings and behaviours influence each other and interact to keep anxiety going.

This can feel like a “never ending cycle”, and to reduce anxiety, we need to break the cycle.



What can help?

Get to know your anxiety

It can be really helpful to learn about your anxiety and its triggers. Understanding it can help you see things from a different perspective:

- ⇒ Read about the **“Fight or Flight” response**
- ⇒ Give your anxiety a **name**
- ⇒ **Notice** when your anxiety pops up in day-to-day life
- ⇒ Remember that anxiety is **just a feeling**
- ⇒ Just because you feel anxious **doesn't always mean** you're in danger

Notice your thought patterns

Most people with anxiety have **negative and self-critical thought patterns**. Anxiety usually encourages us to focus on the **“worst case scenario”**. The first step to changing your thought patterns is **noticing them**. To practice this you could:

- ⇒ Use thought records
- ⇒ Keep a thought/feeling journal
- ⇒ Identify which **thought patterns** you notice in yourself

Once you can notice your thought patterns, you can learn to question and **challenge** them.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies can help you when you feel anxious by **triggering your body's relaxation response** and bringing you back to the present moment.

- ⇒ Grounding Techniques
- ⇒ Mindful Breathing
- ⇒ Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- ⇒ Guided Meditation
- ⇒ Make your own “What I will say to myself” cards
- ⇒ Distraction activities and self-care