

# My Anxiety Management Workbook



Name.....

## Anxiety Management

This workbook has been developed to focus on how anxiety builds up over time and what you can do to help contain or alleviate these feelings.

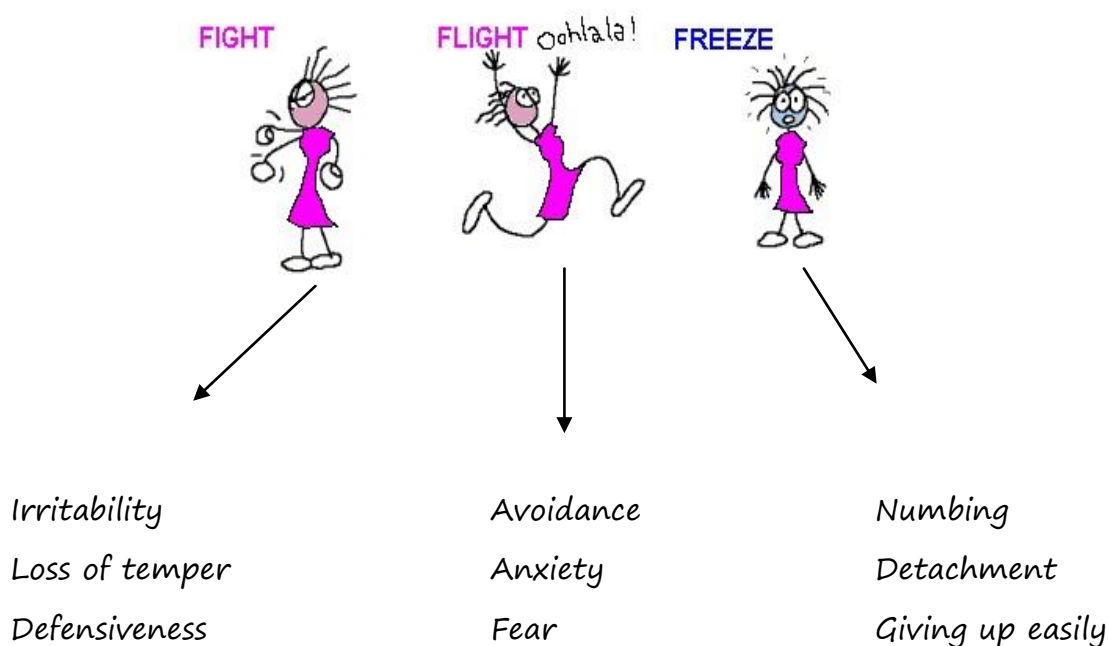
The goal being you to be able to find one or more strategies that are effective in helping minimise the intenseness of the physical symptoms of stress, allowing you to be able to focus on the job ahead of you.

### Anxiety: Fight-flight-freeze response

When we become anxious our body prepares itself for some form of physical action, often called the 'fight-flight-freeze' response. It's something that happens automatically in our bodies, and we have no control over it.

Like all animals, human beings have evolved ways to help us protect ourselves from danger. When we feel under threat our bodies react by releasing certain hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol.

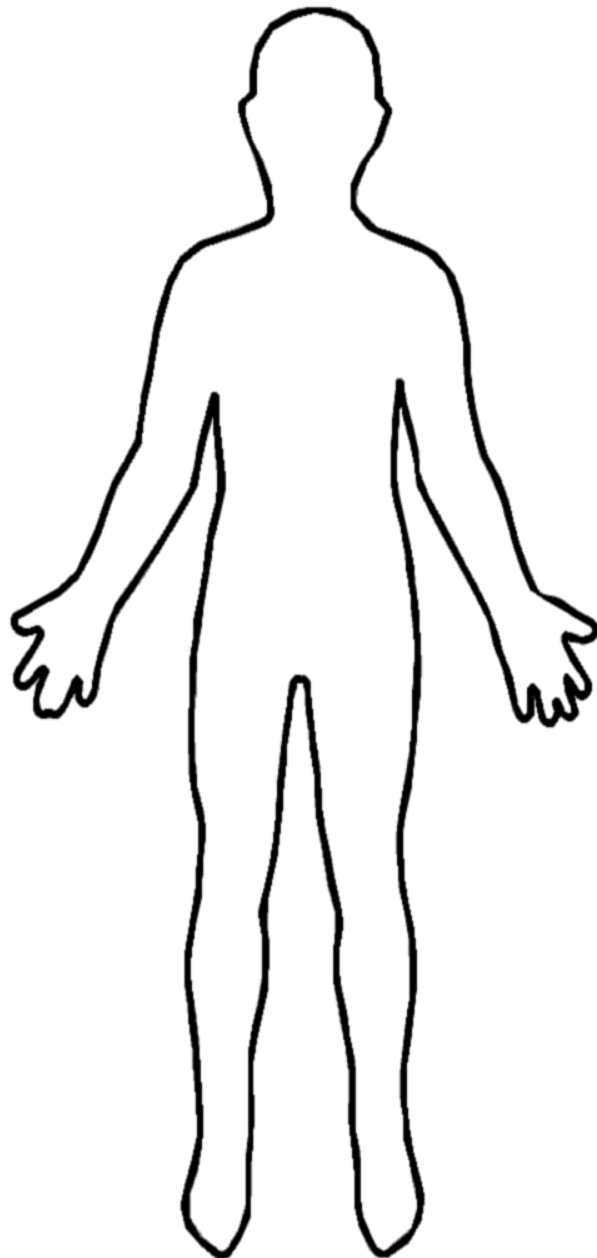
These hormones make us feel more alert, so we can act faster and make our hearts beat faster, quickly sending blood to where it's needed most. After we feel the threat has passed, our bodies release other hormones to help our muscles relax.



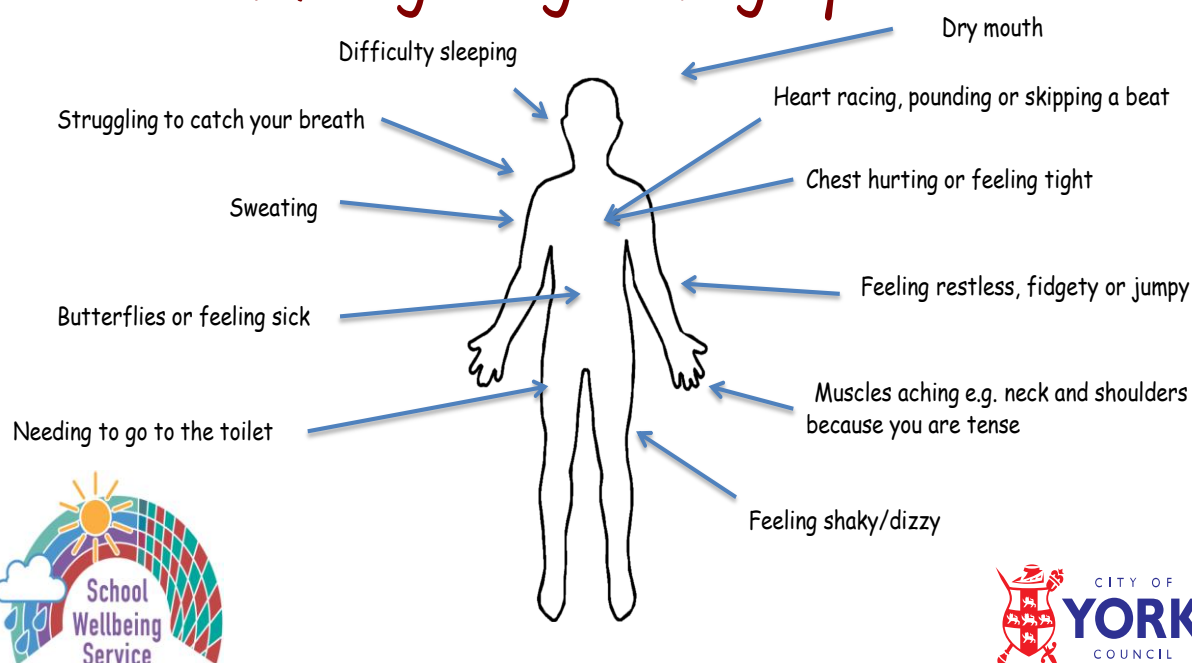
## *Anxiety: managing the physical symptoms*

*In order to reduce the severity of physical symptoms it is useful to nip them in the bud, by recognising the early signs. This will allow you to prevent them escalating; allowing you to manage them and feel in control.*

*What happens to your body when you feel anxious?*



## Anxiety: Physical symptoms



| Physical       | Cognitive                    | Behavioural               | Emotional    |
|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Fatigue        | Poor attention/concentration | Change in activity        | Anxiety      |
| Grinding teeth | Nightmares                   | Loss/increase of appetite | Guilt        |
| Headaches      | Blaming others               | Avoidance                 | Irritability |
| Muscle cramps  | Poor problem solving         | Withdrawal                | Uncertainty  |

*Anxious  
moments  
don't mean  
you're an  
anxious person.*

*Do you ever act in the following ways when you get anxious?*

*Circle/highlight any that apply*

*Avoid things*

*Act irritably towards people*

*Self harm*

*Make mistakes*

*Do things to get  
Peoples attention*

*Only go out if accompanied*

*Seek reassurance  
from others*

*Skip school/college*

*Avoid leaving the  
house*

*Cry*

*Put off doing things*

*Act aggressively*

*Hide away from people  
Such as friends and family*

*Check yourself for physical signs of anxiety  
or illness*

*Deny you have the problem*

*Stay in bed*

*Check for signs of danger*

*Ignore problems*

*Binge eating*

*Get annoyed with self*

*Get other people to do things  
for you*

*Make yourself sick after eating*

*Skip meals*

*Leave situations*

*Plan escape routes  
of places or situation*

*Follow rituals or routines obsessively*

*Which of the reactions to anxiety that you highlighted cause you the most difficulty?*

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

*Lets discuss the thoughts that pop into your head at these times and the effect these can have on your actions.*

*Make your thinking work for you*

*Challenge it: Give yourself thinking time*

*Once you hear a negative thought pop into your head, pause and check it out. How can you do that?*

- *Take a deep breath*
- *Have a phrase you use to stop yourself like “stop” “think, think, think”*
- *Be a detective. Check out what is going on. Three ways to do this:-*

*1. Reality testing – is it fact or opinion*

*2. Look for other explanations*

*3. Put things into perspective. How much would this matter in a week/month/year?*

## Unhelpful thinking styles

### Mind reading

When we assume we know what others are thinking usually about us.

Where is the evidence? Are these my own thoughts?

### Prediction

We believe we know what is going to happen.

Ask myself 'am I making predictions? How likely is it?

### Compare and Despair

When we see the good in others but only the negative in ourselves.

What would be a more balanced way of looking at this?

### Critical self

Self criticism, putting our self down, see mistakes as all our fault.

I'm being hard on myself, am I really responsible for the situation?

### Black and White Thinking

Believe things can only be one of two ways, good or bad, right or wrong.

Allow for grey areas. Widen my spectrum of beliefs.

### Catastrophising

When we believe that the worst possible thing will happen.

Question myself-what is more likely to happen?

### Mountains and Molehills

When we exaggerate a negative outcome or minimise a positive one.

### Emotional Reasoning

Feeling anxious means there must be danger. Feeling bad means things must be bad.

The feelings are a reaction to my thoughts-an automatic brain reflex

### Mental Filter

When we see only the negative-we have our 'gloomy specs' on.

Am I only aware of the bad things? Take my 'gloomy specs' off and take a more realistic look.

### Judgements

Judging things around us rather than describing what we really see.

Trying to find another perspective, an alternative way of seeing an event.

## Reframe Your Thinking

A thought I have had that  
was unhelpful:-

What is a more helpful  
thought?

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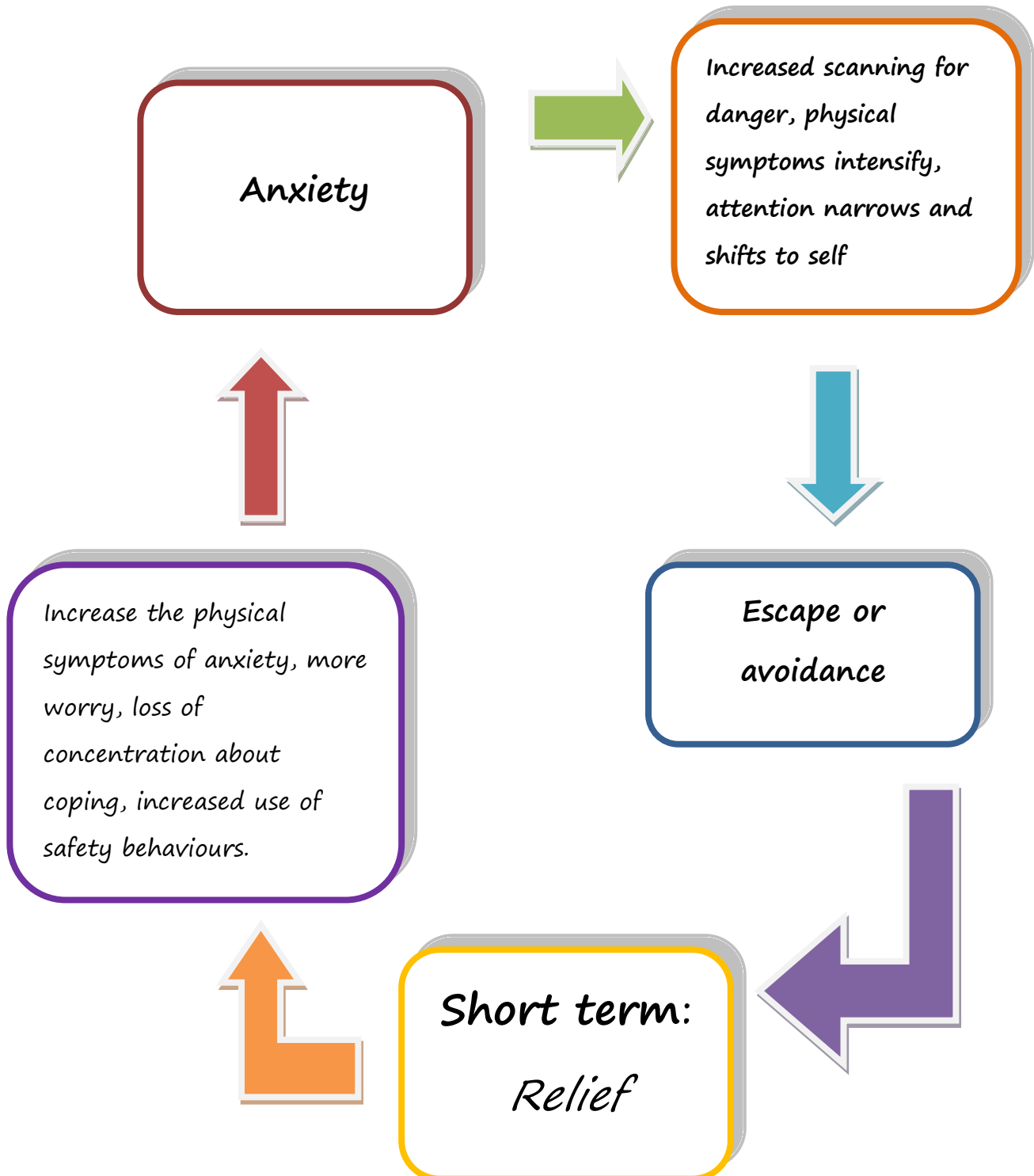
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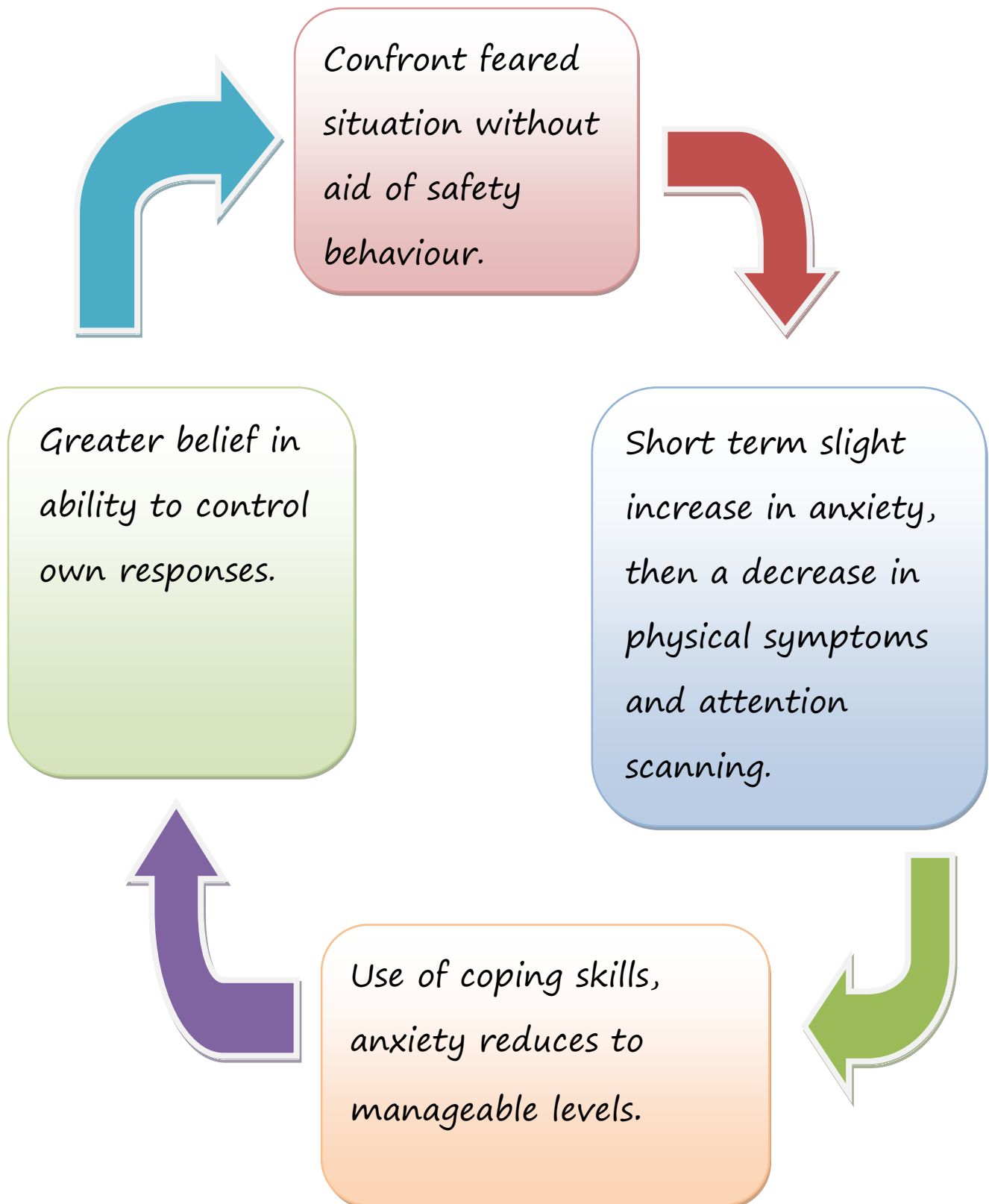
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What is a more helpful  
thought?

## Vicious Cycle of Anxiety



## Reversing the Cycle of Anxiety



## Strategies

### *How can I reduce my anxiety?*

Fortunately, there are a number of strategies that we can use to reduce our anxiety.

Remember that everyone's different – try not to compare yourself to your friends and find your own coping strategies.

## Relax

Relaxation means doing something safe and enjoyable which helps you feel calm. And relaxing activities can help you feel more focussed and able to deal with stress and worries.

There are lots of ways to relax. You could try:

- meditation or mindfulness
- muscle relaxation
- breathing exercises
- listening to your favourite music
- going for a walk or spending time outside
- having a bath.

Try setting aside some time to relax every day. This could be in your break at school, when you get home or just before bed.

Write below some examples of how you relax:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

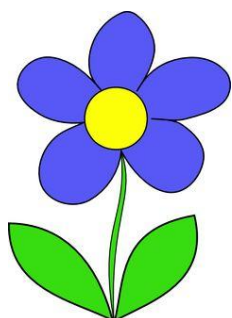
4. ....

5. ....

6.....

## *Simple and effective breathing technique.*

*Imagine you are taking a deep breath and smelling a fragrant flower then hold for 1-2-3 and release your breath slowly to blow out a candle.*



**1-2-3**



## **5-4-3-2-1 Technique**

**5** - Things you see



**4** - Things you can touch



**3** - Things you can hear



**2** Things you can smell



**1** - Deep breath



## *What is Mindfulness?*

*Mindfulness is an ancient eastern practice which is very relevant for our lives today. Mindfulness is a very simple concept. Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally. It is simply a practical way to notice thoughts, physical sensations, sights, sounds, smells – anything we might not normally notice.*

*The actual skills might be simple, but because it is so different to how our minds normally behave, it takes a lot of practice.*

*Mindfulness can simply be noticing what we don't normally notice, because our heads are too busy in the future or in the past – thinking about what we need to do, or going over what we have done.*

*Being mindful helps us to train our attention. Our minds wander about 50% of the time, but every time we practise being mindful, we are exercising our attention "muscle" and becoming mentally fitter. We can take more control over our focus of attention, and choose what we focus on...rather than passively allowing our attention to be dominated by that which distresses us and takes us away from the present moment.*

*Mindfulness might simply be described as choosing  
and learning to control our focus of attention.*

## Mindfulness exercises

|         |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Vision  | When you are outside, try paying attention to the colour of the sky, the grass, how busy the street is. Look closer to see the flowers, the leaves blowing about, observe your surroundings just as they are. |
| Hearing | Listen to the sound of the leaves rustling in the street, the sound of the cars. See if you can hear any birds chirping in the trees or the sound that the wind makes.                                        |
| Touch   | Notice either the warmth of the sun or the coolness of the breeze or the feel of the rain. Feel your foot leaving and landing on pavement.                                                                    |
| Taste   | Savour the taste of your coffee or drink. Think about the flavours when you eat your lunch and enjoy the different textures.                                                                                  |
| Smell   | Notice the smell of the flowers or the aromas around you. Enjoy the smell of the coffee or your food.                                                                                                         |

### Exercise – Clouds Metaphor

- One way to understand Detached Mindfulness and what it requires, is to consider experiencing your thoughts as you would experience clouds passing in the sky. The clouds are part of the earth's self-regulating weather system, and it would be impossible and unnecessary to try and control them. Try to treat your thoughts and feelings like you would treat passing clouds and allow them to occupy their own space and time in the knowledge that they will eventually pass you by.

### *Shoulder shrugs*

- *Breathe in and tense (make tight) all the muscles in your body and hold this whilst slowly counting to five, then relax your muscles as you breathe out.*

### *Body tenses*

- *Try to raise your shoulders up to your ears and hold this position for the count of four, then drop your shoulders back to a normal position. Similarly, rotating your shoulders forwards and back, one at a time and then both together, can help to relieve tension*

- *Deep breathing*

- *Close your eyes, breathe in through your nose, hold for the count of three, and slowly exhale.*

- *Alternate breathing*

- *Block one nostril with your hand and inhale deeply using the other nostril for the count of five, then block both nostrils and hold your breath for five. Next, repeat this action for the other nostril.*

## *Counting*

- Take a second to yourself and, ignoring all distractions, count to ten. If you still feel stressed, slowly count from ten down to one, taking a breath with each number.

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10

10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1

## Positive steps to wellbeing

- Be kind to yourself
- Take up a hobby and/or new skill
- Help others
- Eat healthily
- Connect with others
- See the bigger picture
- Exercise regularly
- Have some fun and/or be creative
- Relax
- Balance sleep
- Beware drink and drugs
- Accepting 'It is as it is'



To find a good balance, you should always keep your **SELF** in mind:

**S** is for sleep

**E** is for exercise

**L** is for leisure

**F** is for food



If you take care of yourself and get the right amount of sleep, food and exercise, you'll be able to concentrate better and feel less stressed out, leaving more time for fun!

## My Wellbeing Plan



My goals:-

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Activities I enjoy:-

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Helpful strategies:-

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I can talk to:-

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*“Don’t forget you’re  
human. It’s ok to have  
a meltdown just don’t  
unpack and live there.  
Cry it out and then  
refocus on where you  
are headed.”*

