

Anxiety Management Strategies

Anxiety is a normal emotional reaction to a stressful event and we need a certain level of anxiety in order to perform at our best. However when anxiety becomes a daily event or begins to affect a person's work or home life, some management strategies are required.

The trick is to become aware of your thoughts. This can be difficult at first, as they happen so quickly that you are often unaware of them. But try this. Next time you feel that knot in your stomach or tightness in your chest, stop and ask yourself "What am I thinking?". (It can sometimes help to write your thoughts down). Chances are you are thinking something negative like "I won't be able to handle this", "I can't cope" or "What if.....".

Try replacing your negative thoughts with more self-supporting statements such as "I will handle this", "This is just anxiety – I'm not going to let it get to me", "I don't need these thoughts – I can think differently" and "I can be anxious and still deal with this situation". Take back the control of your anxiety by refusing to believe your thoughts. Ask yourself the following:

- What is the evidence that supports this idea?
- What is the evidence against this idea?
- Is what I'm thinking true?
- Is there another way of looking at this?
- What is the worst that could happen? Could I live through it?
- What is the best that could happen?
- What is the most realistic outcome?
- What is the effect of me believing this thought?
- Is this thought helping me?
- What could be the effect of changing my thinking?
- What would I tell a friend if they were in the same situation?

Remember that you are in control of your thoughts and therefore your anxiety!

How to beat anxiety

- Look at your self-talk. Is what you're saying to yourself helping you? How can you look at things another way? Are you really in any danger?
- Use positive self-statements such as "This isn't pleasant, but I can handle it", "This is just anxiety – I'm not going to let it get to me", "These are just thoughts – not reality" and "I can be anxious and still deal with this situation".
- Practice regular relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga and progressive muscle relaxation.
- Apply problem-solving techniques to brainstorm alternative strategies to deal with the situation you are worried about.
- Set aside "worry time" – a period of 15 minutes where you are allowed to worry. After this time refuse to allow yourself to worry.
- Wear a rubber band on your wrist & when you start to worry, snap the band and say "stop!".



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1300 our eap
1300 687 327